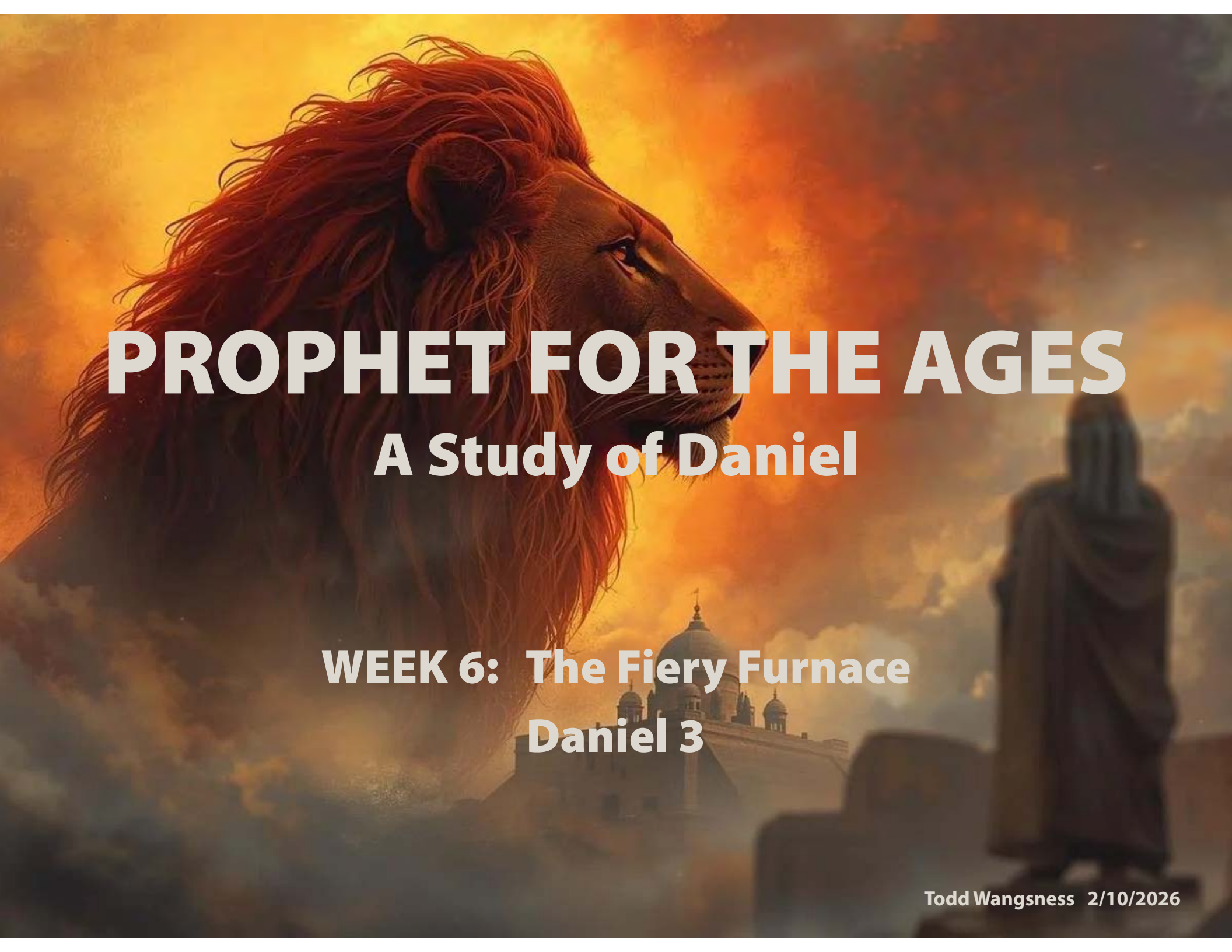




PROPHET FOR THE AGES

A Study of Daniel

WEEK 6: The Fiery Furnace
Daniel 3

Prophet for the Ages: The Fiery Furnace

Notable Quotes About Daniel 3

"Let not flute and harp fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do the right, and leave results with the Lord. He that is married to the world had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war. What sublime faith! They knew God could deliver them, but even if He did not, they would not bow. This is the faith that overcomes the world." -- Charles Spurgeon

"This passage is perhaps the most sublime statement any mortal ever makes in the whole of the Bible, maybe the greatest affirmation of true faith anywhere in holy Scripture. They were standing on the edge of the fiery furnace. Their testimony was unflinching and unwavering and their faith held true in the worst moment. "Our God is able to deliver us, but if not..."

"These men showed us that faith in God is not simply faith in what God can do. But it's the belief that God is God whether He delivers us or not. He has the final say. And it's our decision to choose to follow Him through it all." -- John MacArthur

Prophet for the Ages: The Great Image of Daniel

Daniel 3 Themes

- **Unwavering Faith and Civil Disobedience**
 - Our companions refuse idolatry even under threat of death, prioritizing obedience to God over human authority (and our own fear of death)
- **God's Sovereignty and Deliverance**
 - God demonstrates supreme power over earthly rulers and elements (fire), protecting His faithful servants in miraculous ways
- **The Presence of God in Trials**
 - The "fourth man" symbolizes divine companionship in suffering
- **Humbling of Prideful Rulers**
 - Nebuchadnezzar, who boasted no god could deliver from his hand, ends up praising the true God
- **Prophetic Foreshadowing**
 - Strong parallels to end-times persecution

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Nebuchadnezzar's "Replacement" Image

Dan 3:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits (90 ft x 9 ft). He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

- The Septuagint states this occurred in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign ... shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
- Common thought in the day was – if an invading kingdom could destroy the temple of their enemy's God – the conquering king was stronger than the god of the defeated kingdom
- Rabbinic tradition states the image was erected on the exact location of the original Tower of Babel in the plain of Dura
- Many biblical scholars believe he made the image to "overwrite" the dream he had in chapter 2 that foretold the end of the Babylonian kingdom
- Note the entire image was made *of gold* ... not just a head of gold!
 - Very improbable the image was pure gold – assuredly only gold plated
 - As of today, the total amount of gold ever mined would fit in a 70x70 ft cube
- He was making a statement that he was greater than the God of Israel!

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Dan 3:2-3

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- The king called for all the rulers of Babylon and its territories to be present for the dedication ceremony
- From the context of the story, it appears Daniel was either not invited or was unable to attend due to being on travel
 - It is possible that the king did not want Daniel to be present as Daniel was the one that had given the interpretation of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 a few years earlier
 - It is inconceivable that Daniel was present and participated in the dedication of the image
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego attended thinking this was simply a dedication ceremony, like we would dedicate a statue to George Washington today

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Not Just a Dedication Ceremony ...

Dan 3:4-6 *Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."*

- Nebuchadnezzar mandated the worship of the image so all of the people would acknowledge that the god of the conquering nation was *stronger* than the god of the conquered nation
- Allegiance to the state was an allegiance to the new god and vice versa
 - Whoever participated in the demand for worship would be committing *idol worship*
- The furnace is believed to have been a metal smelting kiln and was intentionally set up on the plain of Dura near the image
- Nebuchadnezzar's demand was a *test of loyalty* – and a deadly serious one with tragic consequences if loyalty was not demonstrated

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The Chaldean Tattletales

- Dan 3:7** *So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*
- Dan 3:8-11** *Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. 9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*
- Dan 3:12** *There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; 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."*

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- ***Certain Chaldeans, not all, observed our three heroes did not bow down to the image***
- **Interesting, because the Chaldeans and other *wise men* owed their lives to Daniel and – indirectly – to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for interceding on their behalf in chapter 2 after the king had mandated death to *all wise men and their families***
- **But – envy and jealousy drive people to do dastardly things**
- **The Chaldeans accused our companions of three things:**
 - ***These men ... have not regarded you***
 - ***They don't serve your gods***
 - ***The don't worship the golden image you set up***

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One More Chance

Dan 3:13-14 *Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?"*

Dan 3:15 *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! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*

- Nebuchadnezzar immediately flew into a rage over the incident
- He gave them a second chance to redeem themselves
- And directly issued a challenge to God
 - *"Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*
 - A statement of defiance and great arrogance

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Our Companions' Resolute Response

Dan 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 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. 18 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."

- In their mind, there was nothing to deliberate or reconsider
- They were very aware that it may not be God's will to spare them
- However, they made it very clear that – irrespective of whether God saved them or not – they would not deviate from their refusal to worship *anyone or anything* but the one true God!
- They would not worship the gods of Babylon nor would they prostrate themselves in front of the golden image!

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Nebuchadnezzar Did Not Take It Well

Dan 3:19-20 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

- Nebuchadnezzar had a “melt-down”!
- He demanded the furnace temperature be increased seven-fold
 - In reality, this would simply hasten the death of whoever was tossed into the fire
- He commanded his elite troops to bind the young men and cast them inside the furnace

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Dan 3:21-23 *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. 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 Abed-Nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

- With their resolute response, Nebuchadnezzar's rage and fury turned to total violence
- He experienced a total loss of self-control
- The extreme heat slew the soldiers at the mouth of the furnace
- And the young men fell down into the heart of the furnace

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Nebuchadnezzar's Retribution Confounded

Dan 3:24-25 *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up quickly; he said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the middle of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Absolutely, O king." 25 He responded, "Look! I see four men untied and walking about in the middle of the fire unharmed, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" [NASB]*

- Nebuchadnezzar's rage quickly turned to bewilderment
- He asked his counselors, "Didn't we throw three men into the fire?"
- Nebuchadnezzar saw four men walking around in the fire *unbound!*
- He noted the appearance of the fourth man was *like a son of the gods!*
 - KJV and NKJV both say "Son of God", but this is actually a mistranslation
- Rabbinic tradition maintains the fourth man was Gabriel
 - It may have been a *theophany* (pre-incarnate Jesus), we just don't know

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Saved From The Fire

Dan 3:26 *Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.*

- Nebuchadnezzar went to the mouth of the furnace and called for the young men to come out and approach him
- They dutifully obeyed and crawled out of the furnace – minus the fourth man!
- The fire had disintegrated their bonds, but left their clothing untouched

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Dan 3:27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on 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.

- **All of Nebuchadnezzar's officers witnessed the following:**
 - ***The fire had no power over the young men***
 - ***Their hair was not singed***
 - ***Their garments were not affected***
 - ***There was no smell of smoke on them***
- **Yet another publicly humiliating moment for Nebuchadnezzar ...**
 - **The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego miraculously saved them out of the fire in dramatic fashion – in view of the king and ALL all other rulers of Babylon!**
- **This was no sleight of hand magic trick ... they ALL witnessed an incredible miracle where three young men were saved out of a fire that killed several toughened soldiers when they only approached the furnace!**

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Nebuchadnezzar Has A Change of Heart

Dan 3:28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, 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!”

- The challenge Nebuchadnezzar had issued earlier was undeniably answered ... the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was easily able to deliver them out of the king’s hand
- Nebuchadnezzar noted that:
 - Their God *sent his angel* to deliver His servants who *trusted in Him*
 - They *frustrated the king’s word*
 - They *yielded their bodies* to not *worship any god except their God*
- A remarkable admission for a gentile king who only moments earlier was foaming at the mouth in rage and fury against these three young men

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Nebuchadnezzar's Decree

Dan 3:29 *Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."*

- Nebuchadnezzar now issues another decree in full view of the same people to whom the earlier decree had been issued
 - *Any people, nation, or language* were forbidden speak out against the God of the young men or else they would suffer the punishment of being cut in pieces and their homes made into ash heaps
- Yet again, Nebuchadnezzar's statement was not an expression of saving faith in God
 - He was not instituting the worship of God for all the people
 - The edict simply provided protection for the Jews who worshiped God

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God Honors His Faithful Servants

Dan 3:30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

- The Aramaic term for *promoted* means to *cause to prosper*
- The three young men already held influential, authoritative positions
- They did not receive an increase in authority, but rather in wealth
- They were willing to sacrifice everything to stay faithful to God, but – in the final analysis – gained substantially
- From this point forward in the book of Daniel, there is no more mention of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego

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Questions To Ponder

- Is it permissible according to scripture to engage in civil disobedience?
 - If so, what are some potential scenarios where Christians should participate in civil disobedience?
- How do we - as believers - adopt the same *unwavering faith* as these young men?
 - *Rev 2:10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*
- God is sovereign. He doesn't always 'deliver' us in this life the way we would prefer.
 - How do we respond when God's answer to deliver us out of a trial is a "No"?
 - *Act 7:55-60 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ... 58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.*

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- Do we have confidence in the Presence of God throughout our trials?
 - *Psa 91 "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." ...*
 - Homework: Read Psalms 91 in its entirety!
- Is the following verse *always* true?
 - *Psa 91:7 A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.*
- Do you consider it a joy when you encounter trials?
 - *Jam 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*
- What should our response be through trials (and besetting sins)?
 - *Heb 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*