

## UNIT 1: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Lesson 10

May 10, 2026

# Another in the Fire:

**By faith, Christians can stand firm when tempted to compromise.**

## THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Daniel 3 illustrates the power of steadfast faith when faced with tremendous pressure and imminent danger. This lesson explores three key themes: resisting compromise, fearlessly upholding our beliefs, and witnessing God's remarkable intervention. Nebuchadnezzar's pride prompts his demand for worship, leading to rage when he is challenged. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego exemplify unshakeable dedication, refusing to bow to false idols despite the perilous consequences. In the end, God's miraculous rescue astonished the king, shifting his awe into reverence for the one true God. This narrative inspires us to remain resolute and trust God.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Today's study offers a striking contrast to the previous one, where Nebuchadnezzar's dream unveiled God's judgment against idolatrous nations. Notably absent is Daniel, a detail some scholars link to Daniel 2:49, which clarifies that his companions – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – served as officials stationed in the city of Babylon. While the exact timeline is unclear, it is generally assumed that some time has passed since chapter 2. This chapter illustrates Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual decline; despite earlier divine revelations, his renewed pursuit of idol worship reveals regression, triggering a pivotal test of faith for the three Hebrew men.

## THE LESSON OUTLINE

### 1. PRESSURED TO COMPROMISE: Daniel 3:1-15.

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride, (1-7)
- B. Nebuchadnezzar's Fury, (8-15)

### 2. STANDING IN FAITH: Daniel 3:16-23.

- A. Say "No!" to Other Gods, (16-18)
- B. Be Prepared To Face the Consequences, (19-23)

### 3. ONLY GOD CAN MIRACULOUSLY RESCUE: Daniel 3:24-30.

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's Amazement, (24-27)
- B. Nebuchadnezzar's Praise for the True God, (28-30)

## DISCUSSING THE LESSON

### 1. **PRESSURED TO COMPROMISE: Daniel 3:1-15.**

#### **A. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride, Daniel 3:1-7.**

This passage presents a striking contrast to the events of the preceding chapter, where Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of Judah as the supreme deity. Here, the king constructs a massive golden statue and commands worship, forcing three devout Hebrew men into a moral dilemma. Scholars suggest Nebuchadnezzar may have drawn inspiration for the statue from his previous dream in chapter 2, which involved a figure made of various materials. However, given that Babylonian culture did not view kings as divine, the stature likely honored a Babylonian god, setting up a direct challenge between this false deity and the God of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar's earlier humility had evidently disappeared, replaced by an assertion of power and authority through idolatry. His decree demanded not mere respect but full-on worship – an act no faithful Jewish believer could condone.

The king's decree was accompanied by an ominous threat: refusal to worship the statue would lead to execution in a fiery furnace. This furnace, likely a kiln capable of reaching extreme temperatures for industrial purposes, served as a chilling symbol of punishment for disobedience. Positioned near the statue, it was intended to express the grave consequences of defying Nebuchadnezzar's command. The king's musicians were tasked with signaling the moment of worship, ensuring that all officials bowed in unified submission. This act was not simply ceremonial but an enforced display of loyalty to both the Babylonian god and Nebuchadnezzar's authority. For the three Hebrew men, compliance was unthinkable, as their faith prohibited idolatry. The stage was thus set for a dramatic confrontation between human power and divine allegiance.

#### **B. Nebuchadnezzar's Fury, Daniel 3:8-15.**

Nebuchadnezzar decreed that all must worship the idol when the music played, or perish in the fire. However, Daniel's three friends remained standing among the crowd of officials bowing in idolatrous worship. Present were "certain Chaldeans" (v. 8) who quickly accused the Hebrews who did not bow. These were Babylonian astrologers who were part of Nebuchadnezzar's collection of officials. Whether motivated by jealousy or hatred for the Jewish people, their words carried deadly consequences. The accusation focused on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego disrespecting and defying the king: "These men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (v. 12). The accusers also reminded Nebuchadnezzar that he had appointed these Hebrew men, implying that foreigners should not have held such positions in Babylon. Therefore, the accusation appealed to both the king's pride and prejudice.

Nebuchadnezzar was enraged and called for the three men to appear before him (v. 13). Had they really defied a direct order from the king? Had they refused to worship the god Nebuchadnezzar worshiped (v. 14)? The king offered them a second chance to bow or face the furnace. The final phrase of verse 15 is key: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" What a profound change from the end of chapter 2! Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed the power and sovereignty of the one true God in action, but now, in his arrogance, he forgot all of that to threaten the very men whose God he had called "God of gods" and "Lord of Kings" (2:47).

Nebuchadnezzar's pride led to a moment of great testing for the three Hebrew men, challenging their faith and resolve. While we may not face a king's decree, life often presents us with situations where standing firm in our beliefs becomes difficult. These moments call for courage and unwavering

faith, reminding us of the importance of staying true to our values. The story serves as a powerful example of how steadfastness can help us navigate trials, inspiring us to respond with integrity when faced with challenges or temptations.

## **2. STANDING IN FAITH: Daniel 3:16-23.**

### **A. Say “No!” to Other Gods, Daniel 3:16-18.**

This passage serves as a powerful illustration of unwavering reliance on God’s sovereign authority. The firm declaration, “We have no need to answer you” (v. 16 NKJV), highlights Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s unwatering trust in God, shifting the focus away from themselves. Rather than engaging in self-defense before King Nebuchadnezzar, they rested fully in their confidence that God would handle their predicament. Verse 17 further reinforces their conviction in God’s omnipotence and supreme rule, making it clear that their faith did not waver despite Nebuchadnezzar’s arrogant claims of superiority. The king’s attempt to elevate his false gods and credit them with supremacy was met with the defiant acknowledgment of the true God as the ultimate authority. These men believed, with complete assurance, that God possessed the power to rescue them from Nebuchadnezzar’s wrath and make his towering statue as nothing before His greatness.

What is perhaps even more extraordinary is the resilience displayed in verse 18. While they professed faith in God’s ability to deliver them, they said that their loyalty would remain steadfast even if deliverance were withheld. They unflinchingly prioritized honoring and worshiping God over safeguarding their life, denying honor to Nebuchadnezzar’s deities and images despite lethal repercussions. This act reflects a surrendering devotion tied wholly to God’s glory. Their courageous stance showed both faith in God’s blameless reign above worldly powers and the ability to stay immovable in their allegiance. Few other passages illustrate commitment and trust as profoundly as this passage, making it a timeless example of resolute faith under extreme adversity and a profound invitation to trust God regardless of the outcome.

### **B. Be Prepared To Face the Consequences, Daniel 3:19-23.**

The beautiful declaration of faith by the three Hebrew men (vv. 16-18) is followed by a reminder of the stark reality of every believer’s life: standing for God can have serious consequences. Their words did not appear to change the situation. Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar became even more furious, ordering the furnace to be heated seven times hotter (v. 19). This was a strange order, since the furnace was already fully capable of killing them. The phrase “seven times more” meant “make it as hot as possible.” (See Proverbs 24:16; 26:16, where seven symbolizes a great abundance, or “the most.”) Nebuchadnezzar was infuriated beyond reason. He even had the men tied up and entirely clothed (Daniel 3:20-21). This would prevent escape (if that were humanly possible) and also mean that their clothes would quickly engulf them in flames, adding to the spectacle.

Nebuchadnezzar’s command was so urgent and extreme that the guards placing them into the furnace were killed by the heat (v. 22). Scholars believe this kiln was probably constructed in a shape resembling a milk bottle. A larger, elevated door with an access platform would allow for the insertion of metal ore to be smelted, while a smaller door at ground level provided access for fuel. The soldiers would have taken the three Hebrews to the larger door, and a sudden burst of

flames likely killed them. Nebuchadnezzar would have observed from a smaller door near the ground as the three Hebrew men “fell down” into the furnace (perhaps from the raised door) where the soldiers were killed (v. 23). Meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar watched in anticipation through the smoke. At this moment, evil appeared to have won over faith, as the objects of Nebuchadnezzar’s wrath were cast “into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego teaches valuable lessons about faith. Sincere faith often faces opposition from evil people and dark spiritual forces, and we should expect our faith in Christ to be tested. God frequently rewards genuine faith and responds to urgent prayers, as demonstrated in the story’s outcome. However, faithfulness can also lead to challenges, and harsh trials must be endured. The key lesson lies in how we choose to respond in these moments, remaining steadfast and trusting in God’s plan despite difficulties.

### **3. ONLY GOD CAN MIRACULOUSLY RESCUE: Daniel 3:24-30.**

#### **A. Nebuchadnezzar’s Amazement, Daniel 3:24-27.**

One can scarcely imagine Nebuchadnezzar’s shock at seeing the unimaginable (vv. 24-25). Three men were cast into the furnace, but instead of watching three bodies being consumed by the flames, he saw them alive and walking around. Even more shocking, they had been joined by a fourth person. Alarmed, Nebuchadnezzar jumped to his feet and called on his advisors to confirm the facts of the situation. Unbelievably, the three were unharmed, and their bindings had burned away, but their clothing suffered no damage. What about this fourth, unidentified man? Nebuchadnezzar saw what looked to him “like the Son of God” (v. 25). The Aramaic phrase could be translated “a son of the gods,” which would represent what a pagan, polytheistic king would likely say. However, the translation in the King James Version presents what the king saw. Most importantly, Nebuchadnezzar saw the fourth as no mortal man, but as divine. The king’s eyes were opened to the spiritual reality of the situation. Note the words of Nebuchadnezzar as he called to the Hebrews: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither” (v. 26). This is reminiscent of Daniel 2:46-49, where the king recognized the truth that the Most High God was greater than any god or image the king might worship. Once again, God revealed that He was with His people, working mightily in their lives. Not surprisingly, all of the officials crowded around after the three men emerged from the fire. Upon close inspection, they found that the three men were unharmed, their hair unsinged, and their clothing did not even smell of smoke (3:27). As we read this story through the lens of the New Testament, we realize that God himself had indeed been with them in a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Thankfully, Jesus has promised to be with us as His followers during the darkest and most challenging moments of our lives (Matthew 28:20).

#### **B. Nebuchadnezzar’s Praise for the True God, Daniel 3:28-30.**

As in chapter 2, when presented with dramatic evidence of the one true God, Nebuchadnezzar again praised God:

“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!" (v. 28 NKJV).

Such faithful, selfless actions amplified the king's recognition of who their God was and what He was like (see Psalm 86:8-10). He then made an amazing decree (notably the opposite of the decree at the beginning of chapter 3). From that time on, he forbade anyone from speaking against the God of the Hebrews. The penalty would be not only death, but also consignment of the offender's family to homelessness and destitution (v. 29). In addition, the three men were (once again) promoted as administrators in Babylon (v. 30).

The miracles of the Bible often have distinctly important, higher purposes, which is the case here. Babylon had defeated Judah, and in the ancient world, a military victory was seen as a sign that one's god is greater than the deity of the defeated for. So, while Judah's exile was part of God's plan of judgment, He also dispelled any notion that their God was inferior. In this incredible miracle, the world would come to know that the God of the Hebrews was the supreme and almighty God of the universe.

Regardless of where we find ourselves in life, we have chances to reveal who God is, His nature, and the incredible things He can accomplish. This doesn't always occur in grand, dramatic ways. Often, our most impactful testimony unfolds in quiet moments with unsaved friends or family. A kind word, a thoughtful gesture, or a display of faith and trust in God can convincingly communicate – especially when the world expects us to falter and fall under life's pressures. These simple acts of love and faith can shine brightly, offering hope and pointing others toward the goodness and strength found in Him.

### **CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

The threat facing the three Hebrew men was unique, but followers of Jesus will endure moments when we must stand firm in faith and trust when compromise seems like the much easier path.

### **MINISTRY IN ACTION**

Ask God for discernment and strength to identify fellow Christians who may be struggling to stand firm, then stand with them through encouragement, prayer, and provision.

## WORKSHEET

### The Hymn of Three Young Men

**The story of the three young Israelite men** thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar is told in the Book of Daniel, chapter 3. Their Hebrew names were “Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (1:6).

**In the Septuagint (Greek) version of Daniel**, included in the story is the “Hymn of the Three Young Men,” not in our English Bibles. This hymn runs to 39 long verses (3:51-90). Following is the introduction to the hymn, and a very few selected verses from it, taken from The Orthodox Study Bible (SAAS).

**“But the Angel of the Lord went down** into the furnace to join Azariah and his companions, and shook off the fiery flame of the furnace He made the inside of the furnace to be as though a dew-laden breeze were blowing through it, so the fire did not touch them at all, or cause them pain, or trouble them.

**“Then the three**, as if with one mouth, sang, glorified, and blessed God in the furnace, saying:

**“Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,**  
For you are praiseworthy  
And exalted beyond measure unto the ages ....

**“Bless the Lord, O Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.**  
And sing a hymn to Him,  
And exalt Him beyond measure unto the ages;  
For He delivered us from Hades  
And saved us from the hand of death.  
He rescued us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace  
And saved us from the midst of the fire.

**“Give thanks to the Lord**, for He is good,  
Because His mercy endures forever.”

## Uncompromising Faith

### Daniel 3

Hideyoshi was a warlord who ruled in Japan during the late 1500s. He commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took tens of thousands of men more than five years to build. The work has barely been completed when a 1596 earthquake brought the roof of the shrine down and wrecked the statue. In a rage, Hideyoshi reportedly cursed the Buddha and said something to this effect: “What kind of Buddha is this, who can’t even care for his own temple!”

1. Some two thousand years before Hideyoshi, another ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, commissioned an imposing statue. How does Daniel 3:1 describe this statue?
2. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow, who responded on behalf of the giant statue (vv. 19-20)?
3. How does this scenario reflect the description of idols in Psalm 135:15-18?
4. Name some of the “golden images” in our country to whom we might feel pressure to bow. How can we stand against them?

King Nebuchadnezzar had no problem with the Hebrews worshiping their God – as long as it did not affect their obedience to him. Joseph Stowell wrote, “Paganism allows your god as a preference but never as the singularly preeminent God” (The Trouble With Jesus).