

Readings

Scripture

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. . . .

⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." ⁷ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. . . .

¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

- Daniel 3:1-2, 4-8, 12-25 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

But if not...
Daniel 3

Life in a Foreign Land: A Field Guide
Jeff Hooker

*God's Rule and Reign are present in foreign lands
which help his people live faithfully.*

God's Sovereignty brings forth obedience (Daniel 3:13-18)

God's Sovereignty brings forth worship (Daniel 3:24-25)

God's Sovereignty brings forth witness (Daniel 3:26-30)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Consider for a moment what it would have been like to have been a Jew living in Babylon. Read again Jeremiah 29:4-9. What dilemmas would Jews have faced who wished to get involved in the social and political life of a pagan city?
- What areas in our lives are we hesitant to walk in obedience before we have seen God act or move?
- If you feel comfortable, share an area in your life where you are struggling to answer with a "but if not..." An area where you know God is able to change circumstances but you need to trust God and walk in obedience even if he does not act in that way.
- Have you experienced a time where you were able to worship God despite a lot of stuff happening in your life? Share what was going on and what that experience was like.
- We live in a similar situation to the Jews in Babylon. We are living in a secular land where we are called to be witnesses of the Gospel. What does it look like to be faithful to God, to engage our culture and to seek the welfare of our cities?
- Who is in your life that God might want to use your testimony or faith journey as a witness to them?