



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Daniel 3:1-30

Daniel

"Faith in the Fire"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Mark, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in the book of Daniel. We're in chapter 3 this morning. Daniel is a book that has a number of events that we learned when we were in Sunday School. We called them Bible stories. They're true stories, but very familiar to us, and this is certainly one of those in Daniel chapter 3.

I'm not going to read the entire chapter. It's rather lengthy. So what I'm going to do is read the first few verses and then skip down to verse 19. But we begin with verse 1 of chapter 3.

"Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."

But of all those who came there were three young Hebrews who did not bow down to the image. So we read in verse 19, "Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace times more than it was usually heated. He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into

the furnace of blazing fire. Then these men were tied up in their trouser, their coats and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. For this reason because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. But these three men, Shadah, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste and said to his high officials, 'Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?' They replied to the king, 'certainly O king.' He said, 'look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!' Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!' Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-negotiate came out of the midst of the fire. The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, no were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

"Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, isasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.' Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come before you thankfully, with thankful hearts. Thankful that we can be here, be with Your people, reading the scriptures as we've done. What a privilege that is to open the word of God, which is inherent, which is true, and we can learn the lessons that You have for us.

There are lessons in every passage of the Bible, even those that on the face of it seem very obscure. They have a lesson for us, a profound lesson. And those that seem hard to believe, such as this text, and yet it's true. It's real and it has a lesson for us. Certainly the lesson is be faithful, and You, Lord, are faithful.

So help us to learn the lessons of the passage. Teach it to us. Build us up in the faith. We look to You to do that, Lord. We, by Your grace, have new hearts. We are new creatures in Christ if we're believers in Jesus Christ. And You have equipped us in that way to understand the things of Your word that are not natural discerned, but are spiritually discerned. We have the minds to do that. We have a new mind.

And yet we need a teacher, and that teacher is the Holy Spirit ultimately, and we pray that You'd bless us through Him, that He would open our minds to understand Your word and that You would give us the proper application for each of our lives individually and give us strength spiritually to face the challenges of the day. That's certainly one of the lessons we gain from this passage, is we as Your people will face challenges. We are as those ancient Jews were in Babylon, aliens in a foreign land, and that's how we live in this world. We are aliens in this world and we face challenges every day, every moment of the day, in this world. And yet, to meet those challenges we have the Spirit of God. We have the word of God, and we're live obediently. And that's a decision we have to make, so we need strength to do that. And I pray, Lord, that our time together, will be for all of us, a time of growing in strength and knowledge.

So bless us spiritually, Lord. Build us up in the faith. And bless us materially. We pray for those who have particular needs, those who are sick. We pray that You'd give them strength and health. We pray that You'd give them encouragement. A person can certainly be weighed down emotionally, spiritually, through the physical afflictions of life.

And then there's the simple strains of life that we all go through at work or at home. We pray that You would bless those that are undergoing that. Give them the ability to look to You and to remember Your great promises to us. Help us to rest in those, rest in a glorious fact that this world is passing away. We're here briefly. We have a glorious future before us.

We're to be faithful with the time that You've given us. We're certainly reminded of that in our text this morning, so bless it to the health of our souls, our spirits, that we might live lives that are pleasing to You. And We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] Scripture is full of promises for the believer. In Psalm 23 the Lord is likened to a shepherd who will be with us when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. At the end of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus sends His disciples into the world like sheep among wolves, with the promise, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In Hebrews 13:5, the writer reminds us that the Lord said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." Never; not in the best of times, not in the worst of times; never.

We know these promises. They're a great comfort to us. But do we believe them? And when I say that and when I ask that question, I mean do we believe them enough to act upon them? There will be a time in our lives when our loyalty to the Lord is tested. Will we be faithful?

One of the incentives that strengths us for being faithful are examples, the examples of men and women who have gone before us who have been faithful. We find those examples in history. We find those examples in the record of scripture. And Daniel 3 certainly gives

us one, when three young Hebrews were put to the test when their faith was literally tried by fire.

They no doubt had some of the great promises of the word of God in their minds as they face that great challenge, and I think one of those that must have been in their mind was Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;/When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,/Nor will the flame burn you./For I am the Lord your God." They believed. They obeyed. And they found that promise to be literally true.

Chapter 3 begins with Nebuchadnezzar raising a great gold statue on the plain of Dura just outside of Babylon. And he assembled his governors and rulers for the dedication of it. It was 90 feet high, 9 feet wide. That is the height of a modern nine-story building. The statue would have required an enormous amount of gold. It's a gold statue 90 feet high. Even if it was simply gilded with gold, if it was just covered in gold, it would have involved a lot of gold to overlay this large statue. So it was, by any stretch of the imagination, an impressive image, in its opulence and in its size. It was a towering figure of gold from head to toe.

Now, there's something about that that I find quite typical of men, particular men of power. You see it in dictators. You see it in world leaders of that kind, from the pharaohs to Stalin and beyond, men who build giant statues to themselves, or giant monuments to their empires as propaganda to their greatness and their invulnerability. It's really what a great statue says: I am great, or my work is great, or my state is great.

And that seems to be what was happening here. In the previous chapter, you'll remember, Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a statue and the statue was awesome in its appearance. The head was gold, the chest was silver, the middle was bronze, the legs were iron, and the feet were a mixture of clay and iron. Daniel explained that it represented the empires of the world, that each kingdom would have its day and then be eclipsed by another. Nebuchadnezzar represented

the head of gold. "You are the head of gold," Daniel said to him. "And then after you," he said, "there will arise another kingdom."

Well, that was the dream. Nebuchadnezzar knew it. No one could tell him the dream. None of his Chaldeans or astrologers or sous-sayers, or any of them could tell the dream. Daniel did. He recognized he understands it. It's been revealed his God is special. He thanked Daniel. He honored Daniel. He made him a ruler and his three friends. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were made administrators.

Now, that is how chapter 2 ended. But over time the king who had been troubled by this dream was now troubled by the interpretation of the dream. He was troubled by that statement, "After you there will be another kingdom." After? Now, he had built Babylon to last, not be replaced. There would be no after. And so in defiance of God's word, he set up a statue that was inspired by his dream, but one that represented him as not only the head of gold, but the entire image of gold, from head to toe. It was an expression of Nebuchadnezzar's will for the future.

It was an idol. It was an object of worship, but it was also a denial of God's will. My kingdom will endure, he was saying. It won't be replaced by silver or bronze. My kingdom will last. And the he gathered all the officials of the kingdom to stand before it - the governors and rulers of his provinces - and required them to show loyalty to him by bowing down to the great image.

Among them were the three Hebrews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Daniel's not mentioned in this chapter, and as you read it and you ponder it, you might begin to wonder about that. Why wasn't he there? And we're not told. Had he been there, he would have been right the beside his three friends, but he wasn't there. Either he was exempted from this ceremony by Nebuchadnezzar, who held him in high regard, or perhaps since he was a high official, he was on some kind of business for the king and away fro there.

The government officials who were there were told to demonstrate their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar by bowing down before

this colossus when the kings orchestra began to play. Whoever does not fall down and worship, they were told, shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. The furnace was nearby and probably where the gold had been smelted and refined for the statue. And according to some ancient images of furnaces, they were often shaped like a bottle with a large top that was open, and then toward the bottom there was a small opening for stoking the fire. And that very likely is the picture we're to have here of this furnace.

So with the large furnace blazing in front of the bureaucrats, smoke billowing from the top, they had an impressive object lesson. Their choices were simple: bow or burn. So when the band played, you're not surprised to read, the people bowed.

All but three: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego stayed on their feet. They wouldn't compromise their faith by worshipping an idol. They were spotted immediately by the Chaldeans, the astrologers, who quickly reported them to the king and told him that they had defied his decree. And that's rather interesting, as an almost commentary subtly on the worship. These are the very men that Daniel Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego prayed for, and whom God delivered through their prayers and the ministry of Daniel, and now they turn on these men.

Well, they reported them to the king. And we read in verse 12 their words, "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they have not served your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

And the motive for their action was probably jealousy, maybe anti-Semitism. That suggested from the expression in verse 8, "brought charges against." For this reason, at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. And the emphasis on Jews may indicate an anti-Semitic feeling antipathy that they had. The NIV, the New International Version, translates the express "brought charges against" as denounced. And if you have a

New American Standard Bible, you might look in the margin, because there's a literal translation of that phrase, and it is "ate the pieces of." And that really gives you a sense of the malice they had toward these three Jews. They wanted to devour them. They were like beasts toward these three men. The Jews were foreigners who had positions that they envied. It's, I suppose, a lot like rivalries that take place in the office or at school. Co-workers try to undermine one another from jealousy. That's really basic to human nature.

And these men were envious. They resented the Jews. And like the gossip and the accusations that happen in the workplace, these accusations weren't altogether true. The first charge that they disregarded and disrespected the king, that wasn't true; that was false. That was a false accusation. But the other two were true. They did not serve the king's gods and they did not worship the image. No, they did not bow down to it. Nebuchadnezzar gets the report and he's enraged by it. He had the three brought to him and he asked, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?" It was, of course, true and he learns that from them. But the king offers them an opportunity to change their minds, perhaps because of their association with Daniel, are perhaps because he knew they were very gifted men. He had interviewed them, you'll remember, if we read that from chapter 1, and was impressed with their intelligence and their usefulness to his empire.

So he gives them an opportunity to change. He makes them an offer in verse 15. "Now if you ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe that I have made, very well." In other words, you hear the orchestra play and you're ready to respond and I'll forget everything that's happened. All will be well. "But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

Well, that last question speaks volumes, to the effect, "Your god is real. He interprets dreams. But he's up there and I'm down here and I determine what occurs on earth." Now that's the natural man. That's the spirit. That's the mind. It may not express itself in quite that stark of terms, but that's the natural man, the way he thinks, the unbelieving man. He believe perhaps in God. He'll give some recognition to a higher being, but he thinks that ma, he thinks he in particular, is the master of his fate.

Certainly a man like Nebuchadnezzar did. And he almost seems to be challenging God with those final words. But he also presented to them, to these three young men, that every believer confronts in his or her life, and that is to be faithful or to compromise, to risk safety, personal safety, for God. Now, it may not be the safety of preserving our lives. Christians - at least American Christians - rarely face a life or death situation. But a job can be at risk. Acceptance by friends can be at risk. Our spiritual convictions about the Bible and the Lord are challenged - challenged frequently. And when they're challenged, the question that presents itself to us is are we going to obey what we believe to be true or are we going to yield to pressure and compromise?

Whenever we are pressured to violate what we know that scripture teaches, we are in the place of these three young Hebrews. We cannot bow to the world's pressure. They didn't. In fact, they gave one of the clearest and timeless responses in the Bible to this whole issue of compromise. They didn't hesitate. They answered the king's ultimatum firmly in verse 16-18. "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your and, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Now their answer was neither proud nor presumptuous. The choice before them was obvious. It didn't require consideration. It didn't require weighing the pros and the cons. James Boice was right when he said that there are times when you don't want to consider the options. When you do that, you're likely to choose the wrong side.

Well, the way before them was obvious. There really was no choice. It was obedience to the Lord, not the king. And their confidence was in the Lord. Their confidence was in the Lord because they knew Him. They knew what He could do. They knew the word of God. They knew their history. They had examples before them of faithfulness. Not only to faithfulness of God's people, but more the faithfulness of God Himself. They knew what He had done in their own history. They knew that He had delivered the Hebrews from slavery and Pharaoh's army. He could divide the sea in Egypt. He could quench the fire in that furnace.

But as I said, their response was not presumptuous. They didn't know what God's will was for them. Sometimes His will for us is not our deliverance. Sometimes it is the loss of a job. His purposes are often hidden to us. But we know this: They're always good. And we know that from what scripture teaches. We know that by faith and we know that, which means to say we know that because we know what the word of God teaches, that Romans 8:28 is one of the classic examples of that. We know that.

And so we must simply trust Him and leave the consequences, leave the outcome, to Him. That's the way we live the Christian life. And that's what these three Jewish youths were willing to do. They were ready to die if that was God's will - ready to die. But they were not ready, they were not willing, to compromise their faith.

But it's very easy to do that, isn't it? Very easy to find some way to rationalize, some way to justify compromise. They could have done that, and you could easily imagine how that might have happened. You could just see them go off to the side as they have this ultimatum given. "Give us a moment to think about this. You've told us to do

that, so let's consider this." And they get off to the side and they say, "You know, we've done very well in Babylon. Do we really want to jeopardize all of that? And after all, we will be more help to our people alive than dead. Besides, this really is nothing more than a loyalty oath. It's really not worship, and we are loyal to him. So why don't we do this? We'll get away. We'll get off to the side. We'll get behind the crowd where people won't see us and we'll bow. It'll be quick. It'll be easy. It'll be a one-time thing. And really, we'll only bow with our knees and not our heart."

Now, that's not hard to imagine. Christians do that today. I mentioned two weeks ago a conversation that one of my seminary professors had with a man who had taken a job that was not fit for a Christian, and he told him that. And the man said, well, he had to live. And my professor said, "No, you don't have to live. You have to follow Christ." It was a good response. Wasn't original with him, though. That originally was a statement and a challenge made by Tertullian, one of the early church fathers. There were professing Christians in the early church who were compromising their faith.

The Roman Empire required citizens to show their loyalty by offering a pinch of incense in the temple and saying, "Caesar is lord." Seems like a simple statement to make. Caesar's lord. Is that a big deal? Well, lord meant god, that he is deity. And then he is the one we worship, and that's what Christians and all citizens of the Empire were required to do on pain of death. So faced with that capital offense, Christians did it. Many did, but alleged that they weren't really worshipping pagan god, saying in effect, "We bow our knees, but not our hearts."

Well, Tertullian challenged them on that and he asked them why they would do that. And they said, "Because we have to work, to buy food, to eat." Then he asked, "Well, why do you have to eat?" "Because we have to live, obviously." And he answered, "No, you don't have to work or eat, and you don't have to live. The only thing you have to do is be faithful." Now that's true.

The three young Jews knew that to be true. They were faithful. They were faithful and they knew that God was faithful. He always is. But here He demonstrated that faithfulness in a quite spectacular way. Nebuchadnezzar was infuriated by their answer and he ordered them to be thrown into ovens. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter to ensure that no god would deliver them.

It was so hot, in fact, that the soldiers who bound the three and threw them into the furnace died from the heat. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego went down into the furnace bound, but alive, and they survived. Nebuchadnezzar could see all of this. He could see into the oven, evidently through that opening at the bottom, where the fire was fed and fueled. And as he looked, he was astounded. He asked, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the furnace?" His officials nearby answered, "Yes, it was." "Look!" he said. "I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of one of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

Well, it was a miracle to survive such an inferno, obviously. But the fourth person who was described as "like a son of the gods," who was that? Who is he? Well, I think we know who He was. He's the Lord Jesus Christ in pre-incarnate form. This isn't the first time we have what we call a theophany. He appeared to Abraham before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. He wrestled with Jacob at the Brook of Jabbok. He appeared to Joshua before conquering Jericho. And now He was with the three Hebrews in the midst of the furnace. It was a literal fulfillment of Isaiah 43:2, "When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you." And it is a confirmation of what all of scripture teaches, that the Lord is with us always and takes us safely through the fiery trials of life.

Nebuchadnezzar came to the door of the furnace, called the three servants of the Most High God, and shouted to the Hebrews to come out. When they did, everyone gathered around them and found that the flames had not touched them, not a hair on their head had been singed, not a thread of their clothes had been singed.

burned. They didn't even smell of smoke. It was a miracle. Nebuchadnezzar was impressed. Who wouldn't be? He said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants." He made it a capital offense for anyone to speak anything against the Lord. And he made Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego "to prosper in the province of Babylon."

Now there's a lesson there. We can prosper in Babylon. We can prosper even in Babylon. When men tried to preserve their job or their position or their life through weakness, by manipulation, by denying their faith, by offering a pinch of incense to the world or the gods of this age, when they seek to save their life, they lose their life. But when God's people are obedient, when they trust the Lord and leave the results to Him, very, very often they prosper in Babylon.

Faithfulness is rewarded. Once again, we see that the Lord is true to His word. "Those who honor me," He said, "I will honor." And He did. And the honor the Lord gives is eternal. He continues to honor them to this day. These men are being honored at this moment, and have been down through the centuries. The three Hebrews have been a great encouragement to God's people over a millennia. The author of Hebrews makes reference to them in chapter 11 as chapter on faith in verse 34. He writes of those who by faith "quench the power of fire." That's these three men. They encouraged faithful Jews centuries earlier, earlier from the writer of the Hebrews, during times of struggle and oppression. The old Jewish Methodius, who started the Maccabean Revolt, encouraged his sons to continue the fight by reminding them that by faith Hananiah, Mishael, and Azaria, or Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were saved out of the flame.

They are a great encouragement because they prove, they demonstrate, the power of God and that God honors faith. He honors obedience. It doesn't mean, however, that God always preserves the faithful, as I've already said. He doesn't. Sometimes He allows us to have trouble. Sometimes He allows us to lose a job. Sometimes He

allows us to pass through the flood and the fire, and men have literally done that and perished in the flames.

The book of Acts gives examples of that, of Peter. He was delivered from the executioner, but Stephen and James weren't. One was, others weren't. Why was that? Why is one man delivered and two others aren't? And great persecution breaks out after the death of James. Why is that? Well, I can't give you answer, and we often don't know. We often do not know why certain things transpire in life. God has His purpose and He doesn't explain it us. He expects us to simply rest in it and trust Him.

But there are many examples of that very thing, of not what we would consider a happy ending. Dr. Donald Campbell gives an example of that that I think probably could be multiplied many, many times. It's an example of a Christian in Korea whose faith was tested when the Communists invaded his village. He was a young man who had an earnest faith and testimony, and continued to be witness for Christ in spite of their law against it.

So they decided to make an example of him. They commanded the entire village to appear in the town square. And they led him to the center of the crowd and put a pistol to his head. And a soldier said, "Denounce Jesus Christ and embrace Communism, or die." The young man looked around at the crowd, saw some there whom he had led to the Lord. Then he looked up to heaven and shouted, "I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe." And bang, was shot dead.

Was that a wasted life? No. His faith encouraged others. That act of faith and obedience became an encouragement to many other believers. And God honored him. Not only honored his memory, but more importantly, honored him in heaven, is honoring him now, will honor him for all eternity. That's what lasts. If God preserves us or however He prospers us on earth, it is, at best, brief. It doesn't last. We don't last. So what is important is that He honors us in heaven. What is important is that He honors us for all eternity, and He will do that.

So even if these three Hebrews had perished in the flames, God is still God and He is still faithful. We can't always know His purpose in life, and His purpose for the events that we experience, and the trials that we have, but we can know that His purpose is always good for us. The results of our actions are not for us to determine. Our responsibility is to be faithful. God will bless that. He will bless that in His way. He will bless that in the best way. Tertullian was right. We don't have to eat. We don't have to live. We have to be faithful.

And really, for most of us, that is about being faithful in the small things, the daily things of life. Rarely, as I said earlier, are our lives threatened. But our convictions are threatened daily, and the proof of this chapter is if God can deliver from a furnace, He can deliver from anything. He can provide. He will do that. He has done that. I think this church is an example of that.

If you know anything about the history of Believers Chapel, you know what I mean, because when Believers Chapel first started, Dr. Johnson and Howard **Prior** and Dr. Mim and the others, wanted to follow New Testament principles and follow them faithfully. They wanted to follow them in preaching the word of God faithfully, consecutively, consistently, Sunday after Sunday. They wanted to follow it according to the principles found in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11 about the Lord's supper and doing it weekly. They wanted to follow the principles of 1 Corinthians 14:26 about various men, gifted individuals, speaking on a Sunday evening. And so they set things up in that way and sought to be faithful in that regard in that structure of the church.

And they wanted to be faithful in terms of finances. And that was an important principle. They were not going to ask for money. Paul didn't ask for money, not for himself. He took up collections for the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea, but he didn't go seeking money for himself. And they wanted to establish a ministry that simply trusted the Lord and the faithfulness of the saints to provide.

And so that's how they set things up. But then when it was found that they were doing, there were a lot of skeptics that spoke to them, spoke to Dr. Johnson in particular, saying it'll never work. You can't do it that way. You've got to make money an important part of the whole thing and seek it and ask for it. Well, Dr. Johnson answered, "You may be right and it may be that we shall fail, but we're going to try and we shall find out if the Lord will supply our needs without making appeals." The Lord can do that. Owns the cattle on a thousand hills, which is to say He owns everything. He can provide, as He wills. And that's what Dr. Johnson and the others decided to do. They would be faithful to their principles as they found them in scripture and leave the results to the Lord. And the results have been pretty good, because 50 years later, we still have a church and He supplied all of our needs in abundance.

God is always faithful. We're to believe His word and we are to trust Him. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego are proof of that, that God is faithful to us every day and in every situation. He is with us in the fires of life. Now that's the lesson. But there's a bigger lesson here than all of that. The lesson of the incident is it's not only personal, but historical. It really gives the conclusion to Daniel chapter 2.

It shows that God has a plan for Israel. Gentiles rule. They have their nations and empires, the great statue and the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had recorded in chapter 2 as a picture of that. And these great Gentile nations persecuted the Jews. Chapter 3 illustrates that. But it also demonstrates that God will preserve the Jews down through history and deliver Israel. That is the promise of Isaiah 43. He will be with them through the flood and the fire and deliver them. The promise of Isaiah 43 is actually a prophesy, because it continues that God will deliver Israel from the four corners of the globe and bring them into His kingdom. He will gather them to Himself. That's what Christ will do when He returns at His second coming. He will deliver His people so that, as Paul wrote in Romans 11:26, "All Israel will be saved."

The experience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego is an example of that. It was an object lesson of God's faithfulness to keep His promises. He keeps His promises personally. He honors those who honor Him. He keeps His promises nationally and historically. History is moving toward His glorious kingdom and it will come, and all of His faithful, Gentile and Jew alike, will be brought into that glorious kingdom.

Will you be there? Will you be a part of it? You will be if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, the rock, the stone, that crushed kingdoms and saves souls. He saves because He's the Son of God. He's not merely like one of the sons of the gods. He is the Son of God, who became a man and died for the sins of sinners so that all who believe in Him, whoever they may be, however great their sins may be, so that all who believe in Him would be saved.

So believe. If you've not believed in Him, look to him, and in so doing, receive the forgiveness of sins and citizenship in heaven, and then live a life of faith, a life of obedience, and remember the example we had before us. The Lord is with us through it all and He honors those who honor Him. May God help all of you to do, help all of us to be faithful man and woman. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we give You praise and thanks that You are our God, our personal God, and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for our triune God, who is certainly able for every trial of life we might suffer, and will never forsake us. Thank You for that. Thank You for the Lord Jesus, and it's in His name we pray. Amen.