

From Hot Oven to Palace



SABBATH—JANUARY 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 3:1–15; Revelation 13:11–18; Exodus 20:3–6; Daniel 3:19–27.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘If you throw us into the hot furnace [oven], the God we serve can save us. And if he wants to, he can save us from your power’ ” (Daniel 3:17, ERV).

“**WITH THESE WORDS** [Daniel 3:17], Daniel’s three friends show their faith to the whole kingdom of Babylon. These three young men show that the God they worship is the only true and living God. Their strong stand for God shows their beliefs. These three young men show their love for God. They show their obedience. They show they are willing to die for God. Their faith is a living example. It is the only way to show the Babylonian people the power of the living God. Daniel’s three friends show that God is the only One who is worthy of honor and worship. These three young men show the Babylonians that nothing can cause them to bow down and worship the statue. This story has many precious lessons for us in the last days.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, page 149, adapted.

At the end of time, we, too, will need to take a stand for our faith. The Bible shows us that Christians everywhere will have the same test of worship. Our lives will be in danger the same as Daniel’s three friends were. So, we need to study Daniel 3. It shows us the experience we will have in the end times.



The three young men show the Babylonians that nothing can make them bow down and worship the statue.

THE GOLD STATUE (Daniel 3:1–7)

Read about the gold statue in Daniel 3:1–7. What causes the king to make this statue?

As we saw, King Nebuchadnezzar dreams about a statue. Later, he builds a giant statue. It is gold from head to foot. Why does the king build the statue? Maybe he does not want his kingdom to end. The king is not happy with being only the head of gold. He wants his kingdom to continue forever. So, he makes the whole statue gold. That shows his people that his kingdom will never end.

The king is filled with pride. This pride helps us remember the builders of the Tower of Babel. Those men dare to challenge God's power by building a tower that tries to reach heaven. Nebuchadnezzar is as bad as those builders. He does not like the idea that his kingdom will end. So, he builds a gold statue to show his power. The statue also is a test for his people. It will show the king who is loyal to him and who is not.

We must remember that Nebuchadnezzar has two chances already to know the true God. (1) He examines Daniel and his friends after they finish their training. The king sees that these four young men are ten times smarter than all the wise men in Babylon. (2) Daniel shows the king his dream and explains it. Daniel also reports to the king the thoughts of his mind. The king sees that Daniel's God is more powerful than any god in Babylon. But then the king goes right back to worshiping statues of false gods. Why? Pride. Humans are sinners. As sinners, we have a hard time accepting we are wrong. We do not want to believe the works of our hands and minds will not continue forever. At times, we may behave the same as Nebuchadnezzar. We give too much attention to the things we do. We do not remember that our works are nothing next to God's royal power and glory.

Nebuchadnezzar fell into the trap of pride. What can we do to keep ourselves from falling into this same trap?



The king builds a giant statue. He makes the whole statue gold. The king does this to show everyone that his kingdom will never end.

THE KING'S COMMAND TO WORSHIP (Daniel 3:8–15)

Compare what happens in Daniel 3:8–15 with what happens in Revelation 13:11–18. What happens in Daniel's time that also will happen in the future in the end times?

The gold statue stands on the plain of Dura. In the Akkadian language, Dura means "a place with a wall around it." This name helps us to see that the gold statue stands in a place that is the same as a sanctuary. A sanctuary is a holy place where a god is worshiped. Most sanctuaries in Bible times have altars where offerings were burned in honor of a god. On the plain of Dura, there is a hot oven nearby. That oven is the same as an altar. Babylonian music also is part of this worship experience.

Today, we feel pressure to try new ways of worship or to accept new ideas about God. People want us to throw away our belief in God's power and the Bible. The way of life around us is very strong. But we should remember that we must stay loyal to God. "Why? Because He made us."

We live in the last days of earth's history. Revelation 13 announces that the people on this earth will try to force everyone to worship the wild sea-animal power and its statue. This statue is a false god. The false god is a sign of the wild sea animal's power. The wild sea-animal power gets help from the wild land-animal power. The wild land-animal power will force "all people, small [not very important] and great [mighty], rich and poor, free and slave, to have a mark put on their right hand or on their forehead" (Revelation 13:16, ERV).

Do you see in Revelation 13 that six groups of people worship the statue of the wild sea-animal? They are (1) people no one thinks are important. (2) Mighty people. (3) Rich and (4) poor people. And (5) free people and (6) slaves. The wild sea animal's number is 666. Daniel 3:1 shows us that Nebuchadnezzar made his statue 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits wide. That equals 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue is a word picture. It shows what end-time Babylon will do in the last days. So, we should pay close attention to what happens in this story. It shows us that God controls the things that happen on this earth.



People want us to throw away our belief in God's power and the Bible.

THE TEST OF FIRE (Exodus 20:3–6)

Daniel's three friends have jobs in the king's palace. They are loyal to the king. They also are loyal to God. Their loyalty to God puts a limit on their loyalty to humans. The three young men are willing to serve the king. But they cannot worship the king's statue.

What helps these three young men to stand strong for God? Read Exodus 20:3–6 and Deuteronomy 6:4 for the answer.



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do not bow down.

King Nebuchadnezzar orders all the people to worship the statue. The king orders everyone to bow down to the statue when they hear the music start. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do not bow down. They are the only three persons who dare to disobey the king. Right away some Babylonian men tell the king. They want the king to get very mad at Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So, they say three things: (1) They blame the king for putting these three young men in charge of Babylon. (2) These Jewish men do not worship the king's gods. (3) The three young men do not worship the king's gold statue (Daniel 3:12). Then the king gets very mad. But he gives the three young men a second chance to worship the gold statue. If they refuse, the king's men will throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the hot oven. The king's heart is filled with pride. He brags about how powerful he is. He says, " 'And what god is able to save you from my hands?' " (Daniel 3:15, NLV).

God makes the three young men strong. He fills their hearts with courage. They tell the king: " 'If you throw us into the hot furnace [oven], the God we serve can save us. And if he wants to, he can save us from your power. But even if God does not save us, we want you to know, King, that we refuse to serve your gods. We will not worship the gold idol [statue] you have set up' " (Daniel 3:17, 18, ERV).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego know that God can save them from the hot oven. True, they do not know if He will. But they refuse to obey the king's order. Where does their strong faith come from? How can we get it too?

THE 4TH MAN (Daniel 3:19–27)

Read Daniel 3:19–27. What happens in these verses? Who is the other Person in the fire?

Nebuchadnezzar throws Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire. But Nebuchadnezzar is confused by something. He sees a 4th Person inside the hot oven! The king says the 4th Person looks the same as “the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25, KJV).

The king cannot say much more than that. But we do know that the 4th Person is Jesus. This same Jesus appears to Abraham before God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah. This same Jesus wrestled, or “fought” (Genesis 32:24, ERV), with Jacob next to the Jabbok Stream. This same Jesus shows Himself to Moses in a burning bush. The 4th Person in the hot oven shows us Jesus before He came to this earth as a human. Jesus stands in the hot oven to show us that God stands with His people in their troubles.

Ellen G. White says, “But the Lord does not forget His own servants. They are His witnesses. The king’s men throw them into the hot oven. Then the Savior shows Himself to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in person. Together, they walk around in the fire. Jesus is the Lord of heat and cold. When Jesus steps into the fire, the flames cannot hurt the three young men.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 508, 509, adapted.

God says, “ ‘When you have troubles, I am with you. When you cross rivers, you will not be hurt. When you walk through [in the middle of] fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not hurt you’ ” (Isaiah 43:2, ERV). This story is wonderful. It is easy to see why many people love it so much. Sadly, not everyone has the same experience. Sometimes people die for their faith. Bible history shows us examples of loyal Christians. These believers suffered awful things for their faith. God did not work a special miracle to save them. Many of them died for their faith. In Daniel 3, God works a special miracle to save Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But that does not always happen.

What can all of God’s people expect Him to save them from? For the answer, read 1 Corinthians 15:12–26.



“When Jesus steps into the fire, the flames cannot hurt the three young men.”

THE SECRET TO OUR HAVING STRONG FAITH (Hebrews 11)

Think some more about the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We may ask ourselves, “How can we have a faith as strong as theirs? What is the secret to having this faith?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the gold statue. They are willing to be burned alive. Think about all the good reasons they can give for bowing down to the statue. But they do not. They stand firm for their faith.

Read Hebrews 11. What does this chapter teach us about faith? What is real faith?

Do you want to have strong faith? Then the first thing you need to do is ask: What is faith? Some people believe that faith is the answers to prayer they get from God. They go to the store and pray for a parking space. If they get a space, then they believe that they have strong faith. But what if they get to the store and there is nowhere to park? God does not answer their prayer. So, they may think their faith is weak. This understanding about faith is dangerous. It tries to force God to do what we want. It does not trust in God’s wisdom and power to choose what is best for us.

Daniel’s friends show us true faith. They know God. They are close to Him. Their closeness to God helps them to trust God fully. Faith does not try to force God to do what we want. As we saw, Daniel’s three friends do not know exactly what God will do to help them. But they decide to do the right thing, even if they will die. Their example shows us real faith. Yes, we show real faith when we pray to the Lord for the things we want. But then we also must trust Him to do what is best for us. We may not always understand what happens or why. But we trust God anyway at all times. That is real faith.



Daniel’s three friends decide to do the right thing, even if they will die.

What are ways we can show faith day by day, even in “little things”? How can doing these little things help our faith grow big and strong? How will these things help make us ready for bigger problems in the future? Why are the tests about the “little things” the most important tests?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “We can learn important lessons from the three Hebrew young men on the plain of Dura. In our time, many of God’s servants will suffer for their faith. People will hurt them. These people have evil hearts. They are filled with a wrong spirit against God’s servants. Satan controls these people. They will hurt God’s people for their faith. Most of all, these people will be angry at anyone who keeps the true Sabbath. At last, these evil people will make a law. The law will say that anyone on earth who keeps the Sabbath will be killed.

“At that time, God’s people will need to have faith that does not fail. God’s children clearly must show everyone that God is the only One they worship. God’s children must show that they will have nothing to do with false worship. No human law or command is more powerful than God’s Word. [God’s Word is the Bible.] It is everlasting. God’s loyal people will obey His law, even if people throw them in prison or try to kill them.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 512, 513, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Read 1 Peter 1:3–9. Why does God save some people from trouble and not other people? Will we really be able to answer this question in this life? Why must we continue to trust God’s love, even if He will not work a miracle to save us?
- 2 What if the story about the hot oven had a different ending? What if the three young Hebrew men died? What lesson can we still learn anyway?
- 3 Think about the most important question we must answer in the end times: Who will we worship? What does the answer to this question show us about the Sabbath? How important is the Sabbath?
- 4 Read Jesus’ words in Luke 16:10. How do Jesus’ words help us understand how we can live by faith?
- 5 Nebuchadnezzar says to Daniel’s friends: “ ‘And what god is able to save you from my hands?’ ” (Daniel 3:15, NLV). How will you answer?



“No human law or command is more powerful than God’s Word.”