**Surviving in Dangerous Times – Lesson 3 – Daniel 3**

 I. Review

 A. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream – about philosophy of history more than a precise accounting of future events

 B. Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction – praises Daniel’s God, but does not acknowledge God as his

 C. Several coming earthly kingdoms, but God’s kingdom is coming eventually

 D. In meantime, serve and worship God where you are (Jer 29:5-7, I Cor 15:58)

 E. Wait patiently and don’t give up hope, but don’t assume this is “the end”

II. Nebuchadnezzar makes an idolatrous statue (v1-7)

 A. Time frame – according to Septuagint these events happened in 586 BC – date not critical

 B. Description

 1. Made of gold

 2. Dimensions – 90 ft tall, 9 ft wide

 3. Set up on Plain of Dura in Babylon – not far from Tower of Babel location (Gen 11)

 4. Unclear exactly what the image represented – the king or a god

 a. Designed to establish a lasting testimony of his glory/power

 b. Designed to provide a unifying focus for the kingdom

 B. Dedication ceremony

 1. All officials of the empire invited

 2. All attended and stood before the statue

 C. Proclamation issued concerning the statue

 1. Upon hearing the music of the band fall down and worship

 2. Penalty for not doing so – cast into a furnace of blazing fire

 D. Test conducted – everyone fell down and worshipped, except 3

 1. A very pompous affair

 2. Daniel points out that it was a farce – worshipping something manmade

II. Chaldeans bring charges against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (v8-18)

 A. Statement made to the king about his decree regarding content of it and consequences for not following

 B. Accusation made

 1. Certain Jews in the king’s administration are not complying

 2. They do not serve your gods or worship the image you made

 C. King reacts

 1. Violently angry and heated at the challenge to his authority

 2. Ordered accusers to bring Jews forward

 3. Questions Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego

 a. Asks them if the accusation is true

 b. Allows them a second chance to avoid the consequences

 c. Restates penalty for failing to obey and challenges them about whether any god could deliver them from him (Ex 5:2, II Ki 18:35)

 D. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego reply – refuse king’s second chance of clemency

 1. Knew this was a First Commandment issue – Ex 20:4-5

 2. Pressure of the situation

 a. Pressure from authority

 b. Pressure to conform (peer pressure)

 c. Pressure from malice of others (Chaldeans)

 d. Pressure of intimidation

 e. Would have been easy to compromise

 3. Their response

 a. Not necessary for us to answer to protect ourselves

 b. God, who we serve, is able to deliver us from the furnace and He will

 (1) “If it be so …” from v17 refers to “cast into …” (v15)

 (2) Compare “what god can deliver?” (v15) to “our God is able to deliver” (v17)

 c. But even if He doesn’t, we will not serve your gods or worship your golden image

 (1) They are not presuming to know what God’s pleasure is in this matter

 (2) Critical issue for them is obedience, not deliverance – that’s called faith

 (3) They submitted to God’s will concerning that part of the situation – God is not our servant to do as we will

 4. Did not compromise even though their lives were on the line

 5. Putting yourself in their shoes, i.e., would I make that same decision?

 a. God gives grace in the situation, not in anticipation of possibly facing a situation

 b. We do face similar, but lesser issues daily as far as bowing down to other idols

III. Consequences carried out (v19-27)

 A. King enraged again

 1. Facial expression completely changes toward the three men

 2. Orders furnace heated 7 times hotter

 B. King orders valiant warriors to bind men & cast them into furnace

 1. Three men bound in their clothes and cast into furnace

 2. Warriors killed by the fire when they cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in

 C. Unexpected results for the king

 1. Astounded and stood up in haste

 2. Saw four men, not three, in midst of the furnace – Christophany or an angel? (Is 43:2)

 3. Points us to Jesus Christ – God rescues us from sure death and gives us life

 D. King changes his course of action

 1. Calls the three men out from the furnace – doesn’t ask for 4th

 2. Calls them servants of the Most High God

 3. The 3 men come out as an example of firm faith in the living God (I Pet 1:6-7)

 a. Officials note there was no effect from fire on their bodies

 b. Hair not singed, clothes not damaged, did not even smell of smoke

 4. An example of what God can do – it is not a guarantee that He will always do something like this (Is 26:3-4, Ps 37:40)

IV. Nebuchadnezzar makes a new decree (v29-30)

 A. Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

 B. Anyone who speaks anything offensive against this God will suffer consequences

 C. King caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to prosper

V. Daniel 3 applied to the NT and our own times

 A. Acts 4:13-22 – Peter and John before the Jewish Council

 1. Council commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in Jesus’ name

 2. They disobeyed this command because God told them to do otherwise

 3. They were willing to suffer the consequences

 B. Many Christians are standing on similar ground today despite the pressure and are willing to face the consequences – increasingly stark consequences in today’s culture – I Pet 4:12

 C. Overall principle – idols still exist (Rom 1:21-25)

 1. Must not do what God has commanded us not to do (Daniel)

 2. Must do what God has commanded us to do (Acts)