



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Daniel 3:19-28 **New American Standard Bible** **January 14, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 14, 2018**, is from **Daniel 3:19-28** (Some will only study **Daniel 3:19-23 & 26-28**). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Daniel 3:19) 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 seven times more than it was usually heated.

If their jealous political enemies (whom they now outranked in the Babylonian court —see Daniel 1:20 &

Daniel 3:8) had not told him, Nebuchadnezzar probably would never have known that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had disobeyed him and not bowed before his statue/idol. When they declared that they would only worship the one true God, Nebuchadnezzar became enraged and ordered that they be thrown into the fiery furnace, which was to be made perfectly or completely hot (the meaning of “seven times hotter”). With respect for the king’s office as an earthly ruler over them, they tactfully told him that God was greater than the king (for God could save them from the blazing fire) and they would obey God whenever the king’s laws conflicted with God’s law. They declared: “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18). God was able to and did publicly deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. God enabled them to live through the blazing fire on earth for all to see; thereby delivering them from Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. God could have chosen to deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar’s hand by taking them from earth to live with Him in heaven, but God had a higher purpose and plans for them on earth (see Daniel 3:28). They chose to let God decide their future one way or the other, and they have become an example for all people, because they chose

to obey God's law regardless of the consequences: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Deuteronomy 5:7).

(Daniel 3:20) 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.

Perhaps anticipating a struggle of resistance, Nebuchadnezzar commanded some of his strongest soldiers to throw them into the fire. These strong soldiers might have been nearby bodyguards within hearing distance of the enraged king.

(Daniel 3:21) Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

In haste to obey the king as quickly as possible, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were bound fully clothed and thrown into the blazing furnace. With respect for their dignity as His servants, God may have internally restrained the soldiers from dishonoring them. They may have even earned the respect of the soldiers for their bravery in defying the king, whom they did not defy.

(Daniel 3:22) 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.

The fire was completely hot, so hot these strong soldiers were killed as they tossed the bound men into the fire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not survive the fire because they were stronger than others; they survived by the grace of God.

(Daniel 3:23) But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could not have physically survived the fiery furnace without divine assistance. They were firmly bound and could not escape by running away. They should have been killed instantly and burned to ashes.

(Daniel 3:24) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he 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.”

King Nebuchadnezzar could not believe his eyes when he saw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego unharmed by the

fire that had just moments before had killed some of his strongest soldiers.

(Daniel 3:25) 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!”

King Nebuchadnezzar saw four men instead of three. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could walk in the fire because of the fourth man, who looked “like a son of the gods” to use King Nebuchadnezzar’s only way of describing what he saw. A “son of the gods” has been variously explained as an angel or as the Son of God in human form prior to His coming to earth in human flesh (perhaps a “Christophany,” which is defined as an appearance or non-physical manifestation of Christ). In any event, God saved them and gave Nebuchadnezzar the opportunity to see how God’s power saved them rather than just having them walk around in the furnace by themselves before walking out of the furnace unharmed.

(Daniel 3:26) 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-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

Nebuchadnezzar called for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out of the furnace. He did not call for the fourth person to come out, probably because he rightly understood the fourth person could become a personal problem for him. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and his subjects called Nebuchadnezzar “Your Majesty,” and in arrogance he had asked Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, “What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:15). He received his answer when he saw the fourth person walking with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace. Our God is greater and more powerful than any human ruler, and Nebuchadnezzar came to acknowledge that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served the “Most High God,” and he came to understand why they would want to rightly worship the “Most High God” only. Most probably the “Most High God” title for God is used by Nebuchadnezzar to mean that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is above all other gods, not the only God. In the New Testament, the title “Most High God” is sometimes used by demons speaking through people (see Mark 5:7). Rather than “Most High God,” the more acceptable title for God in the Old Testament seems to be “God Most High.” In Psalms 7:10, we read: “My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.” And in Psalms 78:35, we read: “They

remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer.” Referring to the Old Testament, the New Testament uses “God Most High” once: “This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him” (Hebrews 7:1 — see Genesis 14).

(Daniel 3:27) 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, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

A satrap was a provincial governor in the Persian empire. A prefect was a chief officer or senior magistrate. The astrologers were not mentioned; they were the ones who had jealously accused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of not obeying the king; therefore, they most probably would not have wanted to crowd around the king (Daniel 3:8). These astrologers were the same people that Daniel had previously saved from death (see Daniel 2). Not only did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walk out of the fire, with the LORD’s protection their bodies and their clothing were completely unharmed (without even the trace of smoke upon them).

(Daniel 3:28) 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.”

Because Nebuchadnezzar knew that only a true God could save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fire and from his hand, he praised their God. He did not call their God “his God,” for he had not converted to their Jewish faith. Nebuchadnezzar called the fourth person (who he said looked like “a son of the gods”) an “angel,” which was his best guess. He was also amazed that they were willing to refuse his command and willing to die because of their trust in God, a trust that led them to refuse to serve, bow down before, or even pretend to worship any other god. Then, Nebuchadnezzar made it legal throughout his kingdom to worship the God of the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:29). From this fact alone, we know why God saved them from the fiery furnace. Instead of compelling everyone to bow down before his giant statue, Nebuchadnezzar made a new law: “Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon” (Daniel 3:29-30).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to do? (see Daniel 3:17-18)
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar say and do when they refused to obey him?
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar see in the furnace?
4. What title did Nebuchadnezzar use for God? What do you think that title might have meant to him?
5. Did God have good reasons for saving Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace? What are some of the good things that came from their experience?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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