

Daniel 3:8-30

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[0 : 00] So, last week we heard about how King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a statue. And King Nebuchadnezzar could not stop thinking about the statue in his dream.

He kept thinking of tall, impressive things that would show the power of his kingdom. At last, he ordered his finest craftsmen to build a golden image. Impressive and tall.

It was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. Big enough and bright enough for all to see and bow down in worship.

When it was finished, King Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, justices, magistrates, and officials of the provinces gather for the dedication of the golden image that he had set up.

I have a very important job to give you today. When the King gives his command, we are all to play our instruments all at once.

[1 : 14] And then everyone will know that it is time to bow down to the golden image. Ready? Let's rehearse. One, two, three.

One, two, three. It's beautiful. Well done everyone. Maybe the King will even give me a real baton.

Lords and ladies, royal officials of Babylon, satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, justices, magistrates, and officials of the provinces, behold your king's glorious golden image.

When you hear the sound of the music, you will all bow. Whoever does not listen to the music and whoever does not bow will immediately be sent into the fiery furnace.

Hey look, they're disobeying.

[2 : 34] This is our chance. This is a very serious situation that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as we know them, Shad, Shack, and Bendi find themselves in.

My name is Ryan and I'm one of the ministers here. You might remember me from Bible camp. Oh, absolutely. He just goes right by. Well, this is an amazing story.

It's a story where we learn something very important about who's actually in charge. Now, I want to talk a little bit about this golden statue that King Neb made.

Now, as Susan mentioned, it's really, really tall. Now, it might be hard for us to imagine here, so I've brought a little help. So, I want you to imagine that I'm this Lego minifig.

Hold on. He's got hair. There. That's better. This is me. So, if this was me, how tall would the statue be?

[3 : 39] Well, first, there might be a pedestal. Let's say it's a Chapman's Premium ice cream container. I ate this just before I came so that I'd have a prop. And on top of that, there was a glow in the dark.

Cactus. This is how tall the statue would be compared to this Lego minifigure. Isn't that incredible?

It was a really impressive statue. It would have been so bright when the sun was shining. Susan told me a story that when she was traveling, she, and across the world, she saw a golden image from a different country and a different religion.

It was so bright, it hurt her eyes to look at. So, it was truly an impressive image to look at. And it was made of gold. And guess what happened when King Neb took Daniel and his friends away from Jerusalem?

He also took gold from their temple. So, there's a really good chance that when they looked up at the golden image, they saw some of the gold that was meant to be in the place where their God was worshipped.

[4 : 51] Now, King Neb was doing this because he was looking for a way to show the whole world who was most powerful. That he was in charge and demanded that everyone should obey him.

And they would show this by bowing down and worshipping. Now, to bow down is kind of a way of showing a person or a thing with your body that you're going to obey and that you're going to be part of their team.

So, it's bowing down with your body or saying, I want to be part of what this is. And worshipping is another word for celebrating. Like, cheering on. Like, you might wear your favorite sports team's jersey.

It's a way of cheering on and saying, yeah, I want to belong to this. I want this thing to be the most important thing. But Shad, Shack, and Mendy knew that they couldn't do that.

And they didn't bow down and worship. Now, before we get into the rest of the story, I want to teach you a little bit of theology first. I know you might be a little bit young to learn theology. This is an important idea, okay?

[5 : 55] I'm going to teach you something called dogology and catology. Dogology and catology. Okay, you ready? Here's a lesson. Now, a dog says or thinks.

They don't really talk unless you can hear their barks. This dog thinks, you feed me. You give me a place to live. You pet me and give me treats. You must be God.

That's dogology. Okay, you got it? Now, catology says, you feed me. You give me shelter and treats.

And you pet me. I must be God. So, in this story, King Neb was acting a lot like catology.

He heard the dream, the dream that should have showed him that God was the one who has wisdom and power. But instead of humbly following God, he built a whole statue all about him and his power and his way of ruling.

[7 : 00] But now, we're going to listen to the rest of the story being read and discover what happens next. We're going to discover who's really in charge, who's really with us, and who's able to rescue.

Let us turn to page 739 for Daniel chapter 3, beginning at verse 8. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.

They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music shall fall down and worship the golden image.

And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. 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. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in furious rage, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.

[8 : 24] So they brought these men before the king. 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?

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? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

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. 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.

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 usually was heated.

[9 : 46] 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. 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.

Because the king's orders was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego, fell bound into the burning, fiery furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, Do we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king. 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.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning, fiery furnace, and declared, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.

[10 : 58] Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire, and the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not any power over the bodies of those men.

The hair of their heads was not shins, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies, rather than serve and worship any god except their own god.

Therefore I make a decree, any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Those Hebrews that you appointed as high officials are not bowing down to your image.

My king, they pay no attention to you, or to your laws, or to your gods. For me. For me. Is it true that you do not serve my gods, or worship the image of gold that I have set up?

[12 : 41] Fall down at once and worship, and I will spare your lives. Refuse, and I will have you thrown in the fiery furnace. What god can deliver you out of my hand?

Oh, Neb, you've got us stuck between a rock and a hard place. You know, King Neb, we respect you, but there's only one god we worship.

We need not obey you in this matter. Our god is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace. But even if he doesn't deliver us from your hands, we will not serve your gods, or bow down to your goofy, lifeless image.

For God is the king over all the earth. Let us sing praise with a song. Anyway, did you ever notice that the gold is uneven? It isn't even standing up straight.

I hope you didn't pay too much for that thing. Guards, heat the furnace seven times hotter. Throw them in. I want to see them burn.

[14 : 02] Wow, King Neb is very angry. You could say that he's as angry as the furnace that he's heating. Now, I wonder, what gave Shad, Shaq, and Neb the courage to stand up to King Neb?

Now, wouldn't it have just been easier to, like, pretend? You played pretend before? You pretend you're a character. Maybe you're a space person or you're an adventurer.

Well, couldn't they just pretend? Or maybe do something that I saw some of my classmates do when I was younger. They would cross their fingers and put it behind their back. Sure, I'll finish my vegetables before I get dessert.

A way of saying, I'm not really going to follow along. Couldn't they have just done that and just gone along with everything? Well, they knew they couldn't and they knew they wouldn't.

It was because they knew that only their God was worthy of worship. And only their God was with them and great to save them. So, I wonder, how they knew this?

[15 : 08] How did they know that God would do all of these things? That God would rescue them? Well, I think there's a bit of a secret in here. They knew it because they remembered who they were and who God was.

And they remembered the truth about idols and who really is with them. So, first of all, they remembered who they were. Now, this is a bit of a tricky question.

You know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't their real names? These were their Babylonian names. So, when King Neb took them away from Israel, their home, he gave them names.

Because he wanted them to forget who they were and forget who their God was. It was a way of him showing them who was in charge. Their original names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

These names in Hebrew mean God is gracious. Which is a way of saying he is kind and gives us what we don't deserve. Mishael is a way of saying who is like our God.

[16:11] Which is a way of saying there's nobody like our God. And Azariah means God has helped. But I think that Shadrach and Bendy had not forgotten who God was.

That he was gracious. That there was no one like him. And only God would help them. They remembered that their God was still faithful no matter where they were.

Now, before they went into exile. Exile is a word meaning being taken far, far away from their true home. They would have grown up a lot like you. Learning about the scriptures.

Being taught Bible stories. And I think they would have also remembered these specific things. They would remember things from God's great story. Things like God put Adam and Eve in the garden.

And it was good. And he wanted to be with them and invite them to be his partners. Bringing his goodness into the whole world. They would have remembered even after Adam and Eve sinned. That God would do whatever it would take to find them and rescue them.

[17:14] They remembered that even after they were taken to Egypt and became slaves. That God brought them out of Egypt and rescued them. Shadrach and Bendy remembered that God was good.

And his ways were good. And he would bless them through obedience. By being with them. And they remembered that God was faithful. Even when they looked around them and saw their friends and relatives.

And people who lived in their city not obeying God. And they remembered that only God is worthy of worship. It was the scriptures that they had in their hearts.

That reminded them of these truths about who God was. So first of all, I think that's what they remembered. They remembered their real names. Who God was. And remembered the story of what God has done to rescue them.

Now, secondly, I wonder if they remembered two specific things about God. They're from a really special book of the Bible.

[18:11] And I think I put my piece of paper down over there. But they're from the book of Isaiah. Who was a prophet. And Isaiah was writing about this very thing over a hundred years before it happened.

There's two parts of the book of Isaiah. I wonder if Shad Shack and Nebi had in their minds. And I'll read you just a little bit. It taught them two things. That God was with them no matter what.

And the truth about idols. So first of all, I wondered if they remembered this. This is from the book of Isaiah. But now, says the Lord, fear not.

For I have redeemed you. Which is a way of saying rescued you. I have called you by name. Their first names. Their real names.

You are mine. Here's an interesting part. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

[19:12] When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. And the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

He continues and says, I am the first and I am the last. Beside me there is no God. Who is like me? Fear not, nor be afraid. I think Shad Shack and Nebi might have had this verse in mind.

That God would be with them even through the fire. Now, secondly, I think they also were taught the truth about idols. Remember the last thing that Shad Shack and Bendi said? They were kind of pointing out that the idol, while really tall, made of gold, actually, at the end of the day, wasn't that impressive.

Well, Isaiah wrote this. It's actually kind of a funny little thing he wrote. Isaiah says, All who fashion idols, who make idols, are nothing. And the things they delight in to make them happy do not profit. It doesn't actually help them. And then he uses this funny example. He talks about an idol maker who goes off into the woods and chops down a tree and brings the tree home because he's going to make an idol out of it.

[20:22] But then he gets kind of hungry. He's like, I need to make some bread. So some of the wood he uses to make some bread for himself and he eats the bread. And then he says, Oh, I'm feeling kind of cold. And he uses some of the wood and he makes himself a warm fire.

And then with the rest of the wood he says, Oh, you are my God. You will save me and rescue me. Isn't that a little silly? This is the same piece of wood. Some of it he used to make a piece of bread. Others he used to make warm. And the rest he worshipped. I think Shad Shack and Bendy knew the idols at the end of the day were empty. They were powerless.

They really couldn't determine what would happen next and they really couldn't save them. So I think they had these things in mind when they were asked to bow down to the idol.

And it caused them to be brave and to trust in their God before anything else. Friends, we're going to see the rest of the play in just a little bit.

[21 : 24] But before we do, I want to point out one last thing. Remember, King Neb asked a really important question. What God is able to save you from my hands?

They told King Neb by disobeying his commands that the God they serve is worth it no matter the cost. And they said it in an interesting way.

They said, He is able to save us. He will save us. But even if He doesn't, we won't bow down and worship. Kids, God is worth living for.

He's able to rescue and He will rescue. Now, He doesn't always rescue in the way we hope or in the time we hope. But He will always rescue at the end of the day.

And when He rescues, it shows us and those around us that only God is worthy in life and death. So let's see what happens next to Shad, Shack, and Bendy.

[22 : 24] put it in the pad.

My Lord, the furnace is burning so hotly that some of the musicians are roasting marshmallows from way over there.

Throw them in. Throw them in.

Yes, my king. Then why do I see four men walking without ropes and unhurt? And the fourth man is like a son of the gods.

Impossible! No! No! No! No! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come on out of there.

[24 : 09] Their hair is not even finished. Their eyes are not even melted. They don't even smell like smoke. What kind of magic is this?

It's not magic. Our God has delivered us. He is the king over all the earth, including Babylon, and he alone deserves our worship. Blessed be the God of Shad, Shack, and Benny, who has rescued his servants from the fire.

They trusted him, and they offered their bodies as faithful service to their own God. Harold! Harold! Yes, he is.

Listen! I have a decree from my entire empire. Send a message to the north and the south, the east and the west. There is no other god that can rescue like this.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, I appoint you to even greater positions of authority in the province of Babylon.

[25 : 16] Oh, we came so close! How did this happen? Could it be that their god is the true god? Nonsense! We'll find a way to kill them yet, but right now I need to eat a whole pint of rain or shine ice cream and cry on the couch.

Malted chocolate honeycomb, here I come! Something really special.

If you look at the front of your service sheets, you'll see a piece of art. And one of our musicians on stage today actually drew this.

I won't say who. But I wonder if you notice any details about this. It happened in the play, too. What details do you notice? What's around these three figures? Who do you think those three figures are?

Who do you think they are? Who are those people? The people? Think they're Shadrach, and Bendy? What's around them? What do you think that is? A rope. A rope! Okay, now what's this right here?

[26 : 31] That's the furnace. A fire. A fire. What's not around them anymore? No hooks. No ropes. Where did it go? It burned up.

Maybe they pulled them down. Maybe. But the story also says that the fire probably burned it up. Isn't that interesting? The thing that bound them gets burnt up in the fire, but it doesn't touch their clothes.

They don't even smell like smoke. Now you notice there's three people here, but how many people did King Neb see in the furnace? Four. Four?

What do you notice about the fourth figure? What does that fourth figure have on its head? A crown. King Neb said something really interesting about that fourth figure. He said looks like a son of the gods.

So as we close, I wonder if you notice that King Neb finally has the answer to his question. What God is able to save from his hand? And the answer is the God of Shad, Shack, and Bendi.

[27 : 37] You notice that we're not even talking about King Neb's fancy statue anymore. By the end of the story, we've forgotten all about it. It may have seemed impressive at first, but compared to what God did for Shad, Shack, and Bendi in the fire, it's nothing.

And this mysterious fourth person was God's presence with them in the fire. Now I think this is a really important detail. You'll notice that an eagle didn't swoop in and take Shad, Shack, and Bendi away.

It didn't put the fire out. But the presence of God was with them in the fire. One person I read as I was preparing for this said it this way. God didn't rescue them from the fire.

He rescued them in the fire. He was with them, just like he said he would be in Isaiah. Now hundreds of years ago, boys and girls just like you would have heard this story too.

They lived in exile, which means far away from their true home. And they might have wondered, who's able to rescue us? Do we trust in the power and the idols of the gods around us?

[28 : 51] Do we worship like they do? Do we bow down and worship like Shad, Shack, and Bendi were asked to? Who do we trust that will rescue us and make us secure?

This story tells them and it tells us that only God can rescue. Nothing else is worth being worshipped. So maybe we don't have big shiny idols today.

Or people threatening to throw us into a furnace. But there are other kinds of kings and gods in the world that promise to reward us. Or punish us if we don't obey.

But the faithfulness of God to Shad, Shack, and Bendi reminds us that God is worthy. God is with us. And God is the greatest.

Because no other God can rescue. Kids, let's pray before you go and sit down in your seats. Father, we thank you that you rescued Shad, Shack, and Bendi.

[29 : 53] You showed King Neb. And you showed all the people reading this story and us today. That only you are worthy. Only you are with us. And only you will protect us and rescue us.

I thank you that the best way that you've done this is by sending your son, Jesus, to be with us. To be our rescuer. And I thank you that you give us all the same choice to trust in you no matter what. Knowing that you will always deliver us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.