

Campaigners service - Daniel 3

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to this chapter that we read in the book of Daniel, chapter 3.

It's a very well-known story, the story of these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And I remember from the time I was a little boy, I was so taken up with this story.

I found it quite extraordinary that these three men were in a burning, fiery furnace. They were taken out of it. They walked around in it. They would be the only people I would imagine ever in this world to have walked around in a burning, fiery furnace.

And do you know when they came out, there wasn't even the smell of burning. There was no single smell even on their clothes. It was an amazing thing. This happened, of course, a long, long time ago.

It's reckoned round about 580 BC, round about that time. We're not altogether sure exactly when this happened.

[1 : 09] What we do know is that in the previous chapter, in chapter 2, when Nebuchadnezzar, who was the most powerful man in the world at the time, great king Nebuchadnezzar, who was king of Babylon, when he had this amazing dream that he couldn't understand, we know that he had that dream in 603 BC, because it was in the second year of his reign.

And we know from history that that was the time. It was in 603 BC, in the second year of his reign. So we know that particular date.

So it was roughly, people reckon, round about 580 BC. So what we can say is this happened more than 2,500 years ago, probably even closer to 2,600 years ago.

It's a long, long time ago. And what had happened, of course, was that God's people ended up in Babylon. Babylon was this mighty, powerful empire.

It was, it had the most amazing city. And the walls were so thick. It wasn't just like you'd see the wall of a house.

[2 : 34] Apparently you could put chariots, could race round on the top of it. The walls were so, so wide. An amazing city. And Nebuchadnezzar was the king, and he was the most powerful man in the world.

But God's people, for years and years and years, back in their own homeland, back in the land of promise, back in Judah and Israel, back in that land, for years and years and years, they were disobeying God.

And they were worshipping idols. They had stopped worshipping the living and through God. They weren't doing what we're doing today. They had forgotten about God. And they had set up idols, and they had begun to worship idols.

It wasn't just that. That was bad. That was the worst of all. But they had become very cruel. They enjoyed hurting people. They were very dishonest.

And they were, there was no, what we call justice in the land. Even if you were taken to court, the judge would take some money, and you could be either guilty or innocent.

[3 : 43] Everything was wrong. And God became angry with them. And he said, because of your dishonesty, and because of your cruelty, and the way that you're putting down on people who don't have, and because you're worshipping other gods, unless you turn round, I'm going to take you out of your own land.

And prophet after prophet came to tell them this, but they wouldn't listen. And of course, in the end, that's exactly what happened. King Nebuchadnezzar came, and he flattened the land.

It was like taking in huge, big juggernauts, and mass, it was, you know how sometimes you see terrible pictures, maybe just now, like pictures from Syria, on the news, and you just see buildings, just everything flattened, because of bombing and shelling.

Well, that's kind of what Nebuchadnezzar did, though he didn't have the bombs of today. He flattened the temple. The temple was one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. He flattened it. He flattened the great city of Jerusalem, the beautiful city. He broke down the walls to bits, and he took all the gold, and all the silver, and all the wealth out of the land, and he killed so many of the people, but he also took a lot of people back to Babylon.

[5 : 13] And he took with him all the wise, the clever, young people. And he said to himself, what I'm going to do, is I'm going to use these clever, young people.

But what I'm going to do is, I'm going to make them forget where they've come from. Can you imagine, if that happened to you, that somebody came, some powerful people from another country, and they absolutely flattened Stornoway, and they took you to another country, and you had to forget your home, and forget your friends, you had to forget, you had to learn a new language, you had to forget the old ways of how you lived, and learn the new ways, and you had to forget your God, forget how you worshipped, and learn new ways to worship, and new gods. And that's what Nebuchadnezzar did. He made, or he tried to make, all the people that he had taken captive, to come, and to worship new gods, and to forget about their old land, and to learn the new ways.

But there was one young man, in fact there were four young men, but there was one man in particular, a man called Daniel. And Daniel made up his mind, when he came to Babylon, that he was never going to forget his God.

And that no matter what happened, he was still going to follow the Lord, because there were a lot of worshippers of the Lord, taken captive as well.

[6 : 53] And Daniel had three friends. Now the chapter before, chapter two tells us, about an amazing dream, we're not going to talk about it, an amazing dream Nebuchadnezzar had, and he couldn't work out what it meant.

And he even forgot what the dream was. He woke in the morning, and he was so disturbed. He says, have you ever had a dream like that, and it's been so powerful, and you're saying to yourself in the morning, oh, I wish I could remember that dream.

It was an amazing dream, and I've just forgotten. Well, that's what Nebuchadnezzar was like. He couldn't remember what it was, but he knew that it had shaken him, and that it meant something. So he got all the wise men in the land, and he said, right, tell me the meaning of my dream. And they said, we will. But then he said, oh, by the way, I can't remember what the dream was. And if you're wise men, you'll tell me what my dream was.

And they were saying, well, we can't. We can't tell you the meaning of the dream until you tell us what the dream was. And he was so angry, Nebuchadnezzar, he sent round his soldiers and said, kill all the wise men.

[7 : 59] And when they came to Daniel's place, Daniel said, oh, hold on. He said, we'll pray. And that was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his three friends.

We'll pray to God. And there is a God in heaven, the living and true God, who tells secrets. We'll find out what the king's dream was, and we'll tell the king.

And that's what happened. And they were able to tell about this great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw with a head of gold, which Daniel said, that's you. And Nebuchadnezzar was so thrilled with what Daniel had done, he said to him, I'm going to make you ruler.

You are going to be in charge of the province of Babylon. What a promotion. But Daniel never forgot his three friends. And he went to Nebuchadnezzar and he said, I have three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

He said, will you give them a good position as well? And Nebuchadnezzar, he thought so much of Daniel, he said, right, and he promoted, he raised up these three men and he gave them big jobs as well.

[9 : 16] And they had loads of money. So that's how things were. And the wonderful thing about Daniel and his three friends was this. They never stopped worshipping God and they never stopped witnessing for God.

Everybody knew whose side they were on. Although they were mixed up with a lot of the things going on in Babylon, always people knew whose side they were on.

And I think that's very, very important because we live at a time, and if you love the Lord and you follow the Lord, it's very important.

Yes, you're going to be involved in lots of things and yeah, we all make mistakes, we all sin, we all do things that are wrong and such like. But if by and large, our life is one that is trying to follow the Lord and stand for Him, people will know.

You can't really follow the Lord and do wrong things all the time at the same time. I think I've told before the story, and I think there's a lot in it, of the, we'll call him Sandy, and he was just about the ages that some of you are.

[10:39] He was about 10 or 11. And this boy, Sandy, he was a good boy, went to church, he had grown up, and he did love the Lord. But he was living in a place and there was a gang in where he was living.

They were a really tough gang. And the thing was that one or two of Sandy's, he was kind of friendly with two or three of those, and the thing was at the end of the day that Sandy used to run around with this gang.

And they were into stealing and breaking things, vandalizing things. And they used to scare people. And Sandy, when you would hear them swearing and cursing, and sometimes when they would break things, he would say, oh, this isn't right. And he would feel, I shouldn't really be here.

But he didn't want, there was something about, there was a kind of thrill at the same time, and he used to get a bit of excitement. And he would say, but I'm not going to join in everything with them.

[11:45] But I'm, I want to be part of them, but I'm not completely with them. Sometimes when he would go home at night, he would say, oh no, I've got to stop going. I must stop going with these, these boys.

But of course, then again, he would get caught up. And one day, somebody said to his mother, to Sandy's mom, really surprised to see you, Sandy, running around with this gang in town.

And she's, surely Sandy, my Sandy isn't doing that. When he came home, she said to him, are you running around with this gang? And he said, yes. Oh, she said, for somebody who's following the Lord, they're not the right people to be with.

Now, that doesn't mean that you were saying that you're never to have anything to do. But what you were saying is, if you're running around with people who are lying and stealing and breaking things and hitting people, and you're part of that group, you are going to become like them.

But Sandy was saying, maybe I can change them. Well, she said, maybe you can, but not by running with them. You cannot change them if you're going to be with them and involved with them when they're breaking things and beating people up.

[13:03] You can't. That's not the way. And I think I've told you before what she did was, she got a glass of water and a wee glass with some ink in it.

And she said, right, there's you, a glass of water. And there's some of these boys who are really causing a lot of trouble. Let's put you, the water, into the ink.

Let's see what happens. She poured the water into the, little of the water into the ink. Nothing happened. It just stayed the same, black. Right, she said, let's do it the other way.

She poured a little of the black, a little of the ink into the water and of course, everything became black. And she said, the way things are going, they will begin to influence you.

So we've got to be very careful. That doesn't mean that we've got to turn our back on everyone.

Don't, that's not what we're saying. But you've got to get, be careful what you do and who you do what you do with.

[14:07] And that was the great thing about Daniel and his friends. They stayed faithful to God all the time. Now, as time went on, Nebuchadnezzar, he said, was the most powerful man in the world.

He got this idea. He was going to make this huge statue of 90 feet high. And it was a statue of gold. And I probably think it came, the idea came from the dream he had of the head, of this great statue with a head of gold.

And he set up this statue in a place where everybody could see, like, you know, you've got the television mast in Achmoor. And in most places where you drive around, you turn and you can see it.

It's this high mast. You can see it in so many parts of the island. Well, that's the kind of idea. He put it up in this place so that people from all over could see it. And he said, this statue, which was kind of pointing to him, representing him, he says, right, at a certain time on a certain day, there's going to be this massive, I suppose, like a huge orchestra playing.

And a time would be given and when the music is heard and probably it was set out all over the land, there might have been in all the different places, there might have been bands set out.

[15 : 29] And at a given time, supposing it was 12 o'clock, you're going to turn everybody and you're going to bow down before that statue and worship it because that's me, that's my statue.

And of course, at the time, that's what everybody did because it wasn't the sort of thing like saying, right, if you want to do that, do it, but if you don't want to do it, well, it doesn't matter.

We read what he said. If you don't bow down before it, I am going to kill you. And how was he going to kill?

He was going to put them into a burning, fiery furnace. Oh. So, everybody would say, well, 12 o'clock, I, they wouldn't have watched you saying, but everybody would have said, at 12 o'clock or whatever time, I will bow down except for three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And when that, when everything came, they refused to bow down. Now, it tells us here that there were, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

[16 : 50] You see, straight away, some of the people in Babylon saw that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego hadn't bowed down. And they couldn't wait to run to King Nebuchadnezzar.

You could almost see them belting into the palace. King, King, King, do you know, you know these Jews that you took back from Babylon? Well, there's three of them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Do you know what they didn't do? They didn't bow down. I wonder why they were in such a hurry to report them. I'll tell you why. They were jealous of them.

Do you know, that's an awful thing where you're jealous. I hope none of, not just looking at the young people here, I'm saying it to everybody, I'm saying it to myself, to everybody, I hope none of you are jealous, envious.

It's a horrible, horrible thing. Where a passion, you see, if you get jealous of somebody, even if that passion was your friend, that passion will stop, you will not be friends with that passion properly again.

[18 : 00] Because you will look at that passion differently. It might be because they got a present that you didn't get. Some people are jealous because a person got a better mark in exam.

Or they got into the team and they didn't. Or they went somewhere on holiday that they weren't able to go. Or because they're cleverer. Or because they're better looking.

People are often jealous for loads of different reasons. And do you know that sometimes in a family people fall out because one is jealous of another.

Sometimes at work there's trouble because one is jealous of another. Sometimes in church there can be trouble because one is jealous of another.

Jealousy has been described as a green monster. And if jealousy is in your heart you know I would say to all of us we need to pray against it.

[19 : 05] Because do you know where jealousy ends? Envy always ends with murder. That's what you do. You're wanting to murder the person. Cain, remember we've said this before Cain killed his brother because he was jealous of him.

Joseph's brother tried to kill him because they were jealous of him. Saul tried to kill David because the ladies in Jerusalem said that David was a more powerful soldier than Saul.

From that moment he turned against him. Daniel ended up in the den of lions because the people were jealous of him. Jesus ended up on the cross because people were jealous.

We're told that in the Bible for they delivered him up because of envy. The religious leaders were so jealous of Jesus they wanted to destroy him.

So that's why I'm saying be very very very careful of this green monster jealousy because it will destroy it it will make your life miserable.

[20 : 20] Well that's what these people did straight away. They were so jealous because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had got promotion over them. So they went to the king and of course the king he was furious and he called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and he said right come here and because of his love for Daniel and I don't know it's quite possible that Daniel it's quite possible that the king because he knew Daniel's love for God might have excused Daniel from this because I know Daniel wouldn't have bowed down.

But anyway he called for these three men and he said you know I'm going to give you one chance now normally he wouldn't have given anybody a chance. He said I'm going to give you one last

chance.

You bow down or else I will throw you into the burning fiery furnace. Do you know it costs a lot sometimes to follow Jesus.

Jesus in fact says to us to follow him it means sometimes taking up our cross and denying ourselves. It can sometimes be difficult it can sometimes be dangerous following Jesus.

And that's what these three men found. But you know the amazing thing was the king said right I'm going to give you one more chance when you hear the music and you know what they said king it's all right you don't need to play the music.

[21 : 52] We will not bow down and worship your God. There is only one God that we will worship and serve. See these men knew their ten commandments.

first commandment you shall have no other gods before me. Second commandment you shall not bow down and worship a graven image or a carved image which is what was there.

They knew that there is only one living and through God and so they were not prepared to bow down. And they said to the king king our God whom we serve is able to deliver us but even if he doesn't we will not bow down before your God.

Well it tells us Nebuchadnezzar this is what it says about him he was filled with fury. If when something is full you can't put anything else into it.

If a jar is full or a bottle is full it's full. Well that's how Nebuchadnezzar was. It was like he was so angry he was so filled with anger it was like he was ready to explode.

[23 : 10] He was so angry his face changed. You could just see him. The race whole face changed with anger. and he said heat that furnace up seven times hotter than usual.

He was so so angry. Then we find that Shadrach Meshach and Abednego they were taken and they were thrown in to this burning fiery furnace.

And you know the wonderful thing is that Nebuchadnezzar came to watch. Isn't it horrible? He thought I'm going to watch these people burn to death.

And the fire was so so fush that the soldiers who were throwing Nebuchadnezzar in the fire caught them and killed them.

But as Nebuchadnezzar watched he saw something he could almost see him rubbing his eyes. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. And he called the men and he said didn't we not throw three men into the fire?

[24 : 23] And he said yes it was three men. Oh he said I see four men and he couldn't believe what he was seeing. Four men walking.

Nebuchadnezzar was terrified because the fourth was the angel of the covenant Jesus. it was an appearance of Jesus in the flames.

And you know this is quite amazing because Nebuchadnezzar was terrified when he saw Jesus. God's people aren't terrified their hearts thrill when they see Jesus.

And you know what it tells us at the end of the age? that when Jesus returns into this world because Jesus is coming back that those who don't like Jesus who never wanted Jesus who mocked the name of Jesus they're going to call on the mountains and the hills to cover them to hide them from Jesus but those who love Jesus are going to say even so come Lord Jesus and so

Nebuchadnezzar he was filled with he was filled with fear you can see him shaking here I have a feeling that only Nebuchadnezzar saw the four because I believe that God opened his eyes to see it's the very same as remember there was a time when Elisha the prophet when he was in the city and the enemy circled the city the enemy came round and circled the city and there was a huge army all round the city and the servant of

Elisha was terrified and he said oh master what are we going to do we're finished look at the army Elisha said it's all right he said there's far more with us than with them and Elisha servant must have thought oh poor Elisha he must be getting old he must be losing himself what do you mean there are more with us than with them and Elisha prayed and he said Lord open the young man's eyes and the Lord opened his eyes to see he saw spiritually he saw what the ordinary human eye couldn't see and he saw that the whole place was surrounded surrounded with angels the whole place was surrounded with us like chariots of firewood and there was like a vast army circling round it was an amazing moment and we live in a world where there is good and there's bad and there are evil spirits and there are angels and there is God the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness led by

[27 : 37] Satan we're here in this struggle in the middle and God is the one who has set out for us all that is good Satan is the one who is trying to always break it up and to destroy and God has given the promise here of how if we look to him and trust in him that he will deliver us now of course there are times when our bodies may be hurt and there will come a time when even our bodies will die but if we trust in Jesus our souls will never ever die I think I might have told you the story before of two missionaries who were working in a hospital in Malaysia and they went into the hospital was away in a country place and they went into the town because they knew there was money that had come for them and this money was to help them in the mission station in this hospital where they were working it was a bit of money so they went in to collect it it was quite a distance back to where they were going it was too far for them to walk in the one night so they realized they were going to have to stop and they stopped on a hillside and they lay down and they prayed to the Lord and they said Lord please keep us from all robbers and bandits and wild beasts and they went to sleep

I was fine about three weeks later this man came to the hospital and he was looking at one of the missionary this missionary was a doctor missionary and he said to him I've seen you before the missionary said I've never seen you the man said I've seen you he said you and your friend slept one night on the hillside we saw you coming out of the bank in the town we knew you had money so we followed you and we were waiting until you fell asleep and then we were going to come and attack you and rob you but we couldn't because of the soldiers around you there were sixteen soldiers and we were hoping they would go away but they never they stayed there all night till you got up so we just went away the missionary said no there was just the two of us there were no soldiers there were he said that's why we didn't rob you and attack you anyway about a year later the two missionaries came back to Britain for a while and they were then going to go back to Malaysia and as is often the case missionaries go around and they talk in different places and one of this missionary doctor he was talking the place and he told this story about this night and he said that there were the bandits had seen sixteen soldiers and when he finished talking a man came to him and said can you check up do you know the date when that was the man said well I have a diary I keep a diary about everything and he checked up and he looked and he said right I will give you the date supposing it was like the twenty-seventh of May and the other man checked up and he said you know we meet every week there is a group of us and we pray for different things and that night we were praying for you and there are sixteen of us and we met for prayer and the sixteen of us were praying for you you remember the bandit they saw sixteen soldiers the lord had obviously sent angels and they were given they were able to see so it's an amazing thing that the bible tells us that angels are ministering spirits and so here we have this great deliverance where god rescued his people and i hope that all of us will will come to trust in the lord although this happened two thousand five hundred years ago two thousand six hundred years ago god never changes he's the same god and he is able to do for you and for me far and beyond anything we could ask or think let's pray lord our god we pray to bless us we pray that our trust might be in the lord deliver us oh lord because we need deliverance from so many things have mercy upon us bless us in all that we're about bless the cup of tea in the hall after bless all family and friends here today wash away from us all our sin in jesus name we ask it amen