

Date: 07-12-2020
Series: The Book of Daniel

WHO DO YOU BOW DOWN TO?

(Daniel 3)

Craig Larson, who lives in a Chicago suburb, shared a story about resident of Illinois who really didn't seem like a resident of Illinois.

Larson said:

On the way to work this morning, I pulled up to a stop light and noticed an interesting SUV in front of me. The owner of the SUV was clearly a person of deep loyalty. The **spare tire** mounted on the back had the words "Texas Longhorns" with the picture of an orange steer. The **trailer hitch** displayed another steer and the word "Texas." **The license plate frame** was bordered with the words "The University of Texas" on top and "Longhorns" at the bottom.

But something didn't add up. That license plate frame bordered a **blue-and-white, Illinois, "Land of Lincoln" license plate** with a picture of old Abe himself on it. I live in Illinois, and the SUV's license plate shows that this driver does, too. The owner of this SUV had moved, but had not yet identified with his new home and, apparently, had no plans of changing loyalties.

When you read Daniel chapter 3, what you are reading is **the story of three** Jewish men who have moved (or should we say, have *been moved*) to a new country 500 miles away. And they are like the man from Texas I just spoke of who was now living in Illinois. They are definitely **living** in this foreign land of Babylon, and they are definitely **under the rule** of the king of Babylon named Nebuchadnezzar, but the question is, who are they loyal to? When push comes to shove, who do the three Hebrew men **REALLY** bow down to and worship? This is an important question to answer regarding these men and regarding each of us as well.

And that is what I would like to speak to you about for a few minutes this morning.

Title: Who Do You Bow Down To?

(Prayer)

If you were to ask most Americans about the most famous statue they can think of, they would probably say, "**The Statue of Liberty**," or "The **Lincoln Memorial**."

- Daniel 3 and story of **giant statue** (prob. of his false god Marduk)

3:12: these three men “do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

- This story most likely takes place a couple of years after Daniel interprets N’s dream in Dan 2.

N extols God:

Daniel 2:47-----“Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.”

- But, in Dan 3, he is back to his old, polytheistic ways.

Let’s walk through this story and then, at the end of the message, we will look at some key lessons:

1. **Nebuchadnezzar demands worship (3:1-7)**

Daniel 3:4–6-----⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages ... you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

Good stories start with some form of tension. Possibly, N has gotten word of disloyalty in his army or in his govt. So he sets up this test of loyalty. This command would be no problem to most. Not with the Hebrew followers of the true God!

2. **Daniel’s friends deny worship (3:8-12)**

They absolutely refuse to bow down and get accused (prob. out of jealousy) by the very people whose lives were saved by Daniel:

Daniel 3:12–13-----¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

3. **Daniel’s friends deny worship again (3:13-18)**

N is furious and has S, M, & A brought before him. N gives them a second chance. *“If you bow down, great! But if you don’t, you will die in the fiery furnace! What god will rescue you from my hands?”* (Total arrog.)

Their response?

Daniel 3:16–18----- “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

They're willing to die. That's their level of commitment to God! To love and obey Him regardless of the outcome.

4. **Daniel's friends dumped into the furnace (3:19-23)**

N has the furnace heated as hot as is possible (prob. 1600 degrees!). His men die throwing them in the furnace it is so hot.

But God intervenes.

5. **Daniel's friends delivered by God (3:24-25)**

N looks into the furnace and not only are the three men untouched by the flames and moving around, but there is a fourth figure with them.

Daniel 3:25-----²⁵ “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (Heb, *a son of the gods*)

(comments on 4th figure)

6. **Nebuchadnezzar honors God (3:26-30)**

(as well as S, M, & A!!!!)

In ch. 2, (in RE to N's dream) N's men said: “**There is no god who can do this!**”

Earlier in ch. 3, N says: “**What god can rescue you from my hands?**”

Now in ch. 3, N says: “**There is NO OTHER God who can deliver like this.**”

Daniel 3:28–29-----Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ ... **there is no other God who can deliver like this.**”

And then, v. 30 says:

Daniel 3:30-----³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

So N honors both God and Daniel's three friends.

Lessons:

1. **In the midst of a pagan, idolatrous world, we will always face the temptation to bow down to false gods.**

This is not a story about a crazy man who made a statue he wants people to bow down to. It is about the temptation N and all of us as humans face to worship things other than the true God. Adam and Eve started it all. Satan told them they could be "like God." God wanted them to rule with Him and be a "little statue"---a reflection--- of His likeness. They said, "No, I don't want to someone telling me how to live, I want to be God and do what I want to do." And every human since Adam and Eve have faced this same temptation and problem.

Dan 2:37-38 tell us that God gave N rule and auth. over the greatest kingdom on earth. It's not good enough and he makes a statue and demands people to worship it. *I'm in control ... People will do what I demand!*"

That's why people fight one another. That's why spouses fight. The temptation to be **ruler** rather than a **reflector** of God and His beauty and character.

God made us in His image---to reflect Him---and we rebel and make God in our image. *"I want to be king ... to rule my own life ... to do things the way I want to do them."*

Paul called this "worshipping the creature rather than the creator."

2. **We must stand for God and bow down to Him only regardless of the consequences.**

When N gave Daniel's 3 friends a second chance to worship him, they said, *"Our God is able to deliver us from your fiery furnace, **but if not** (even if He doesn't), we are not going to worship the image you made!"*

God is calling you and I who are all part of this pagan culture to be absolutely loyal and committed to Him. And when you do that, others will be impacted by that, and God will reward you for your loyalty to Him.

N was furious at S, M, & A ... but they refused to be afraid. They were like Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:29:

“We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Spartacus is the classic movie that retells the historical account of the great Roman slave rebellion in 71 B.C.

Spartacus (played by Kirk Douglas who ended up living to the age of 103) was a highly trained gladiator who escaped and led other slaves to freedom.

As news of his rebellion grew, thousands of slaves joined his cause and followed him in victory and defeat.

Near the end of the movie, a massive detachment of Roman soldiers under the command of Crassus captures the rebel slaves. And although Crassus does not know what Spartacus looks like, he suspects that Spartacus is alive amongst the prisoners under guard.

In full Roman uniform, Crassus gallops up to the mouth of the valley where the prisoners are being held and shouts an offer to them: they can escape death by crucifixion if they turn Spartacus over to him.

Spartacus stares at the ground for a moment and then nobly stands to his feet, intending to turn himself in.

But at the same moment Spartacus stands to his feet, the slave to the right of him stands and shouts, **“I am Spartacus!”**

Then a slave to his left also stands and shouts, **“I am Spartacus!”**

And as the real Spartacus looks around, every man in his slave army rises to his feet and shouts, **“I am Spartacus!”** until there are thousands standing for Spartacus!

Let me ask you a question: Will you stand for Jesus the same way these men stood for Spartacus?

Will you refuse to bow down to the people, places, and things around you, worshiping them instead of God? Putting yourself in the place of God?

Haven't you been putting yourself on the throne of your life long enough?

Who do **you** bow down to?