



## Defying the Death Decree

For every Bible truth there is a counterfeit. The devil is determined to deceive God's people. From the beginning, his work has been one of deception. He is the father of lies (John 8:44). He lied when he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4), and he has been lying ever since. In contrast, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). His truth exposes Satan's lies. Truth is worth living for, worth dying for! Our faithfulness to Christ and His truth will finally determine our eternal destiny.

You will recall in Daniel 2, God gave Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, a dream of the future. In Chapter 3, the king builds his own counterfeit image. In opposition to God's view of the future, Nebuchadnezzar desires to take the future into his own hands. God revealed the future as being dominated by successive empires depicted by an image made of gold, silver, brass, and iron. But the image Nebuchadnezzar made was all gold, indicating his desire for Babylon to last forever.

Nebuchadnezzar summoned representatives from his entire Kingdom. The decree was universal. The central issue in this growing conflict centers in worship. The counterfeit and genuine collide. In a moving drama on the plains of Dura, loyalty to the king meets head-on with loyalty to God.

A powerful world leader passes a universal death decree. The central issue revolves around worship. The penalty for disobeying the command of this powerful world leader, who has united church and state, is death.

According to Romans 13:1, Christians have a responsibility to obey the civil authorities. We should obey the laws of the land. Yet no earthly power has the authority to intervene between one's individual conscience and God. The divine commands of God supersede the human laws of the state. If any state passes laws requiring its citizens to violate God's law, God's people are always subject to the higher law of God.

The three Hebrew youths were placed in a trying position. Preserving their loyalty to God meant being disloyal to Nebuchadnezzar – and subject to death.

The response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was immediate. The King James Version says, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter, O King” (verse 16). The old English word “careful” means hesitant. They were determined. Procrastination, hesitancy, or delay would have made them vulnerable to Satan’s temptations. The only safe course when faced with temptation is to take a decided stand for right.

As Nebuchadnezzar peered into the flames expecting to see the Hebrews immediately consumed, he saw four men loose – not three men bound. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, leaped into the flames and miraculously delivered the Hebrews. The only thing consumed were the bonds which bound them. In the trials of life, Jesus is there. In the heartaches of life, He is there. When we go through the flames, He is there.

The “Son of God” is one of the most powerful names of Jesus. It denotes His ability to deliver us in trial. When we go through our darkest times, He is always there. He is the “Son of God”; nevertheless, He became a human being and dwelt in human flesh so He understands our heartaches and longings.

When we make decisions to do right, when we are faithful to God’s Word, when we obey the dictates of a spirit-inspired conscience, when we follow God totally, our lives will have a powerful influence on others. We, too, will influence them for right!

- Daniel 3:1** King Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold.
- Daniel 3:2, 3** King sends an invitation to the government officials to come for a dedication of the image.
- Daniel 3:4, 5** When the music plays they are to bow down and worship the image.
- Daniel 3:6** Those who do not bow down will be thrown into the fiery furnace.
- Rev. 13:12** Worship the first beast whose deadly wound is healed.
- Rev. 13:15** Causes many that would not worship the beast to be killed.
- Daniel 3:7-14** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the image.
- Daniel 3:15, 16** They are given a second chance to bow down to the image.
- Daniel 3:17, 18** God is able to deliver them from the furnace,
- Daniel 3:19-25** The King is furious and ordered the furnace to be 7 times hotter and they are thrown inside the furnace. They are not destroyed; God is with them in the fire. The King is astonished.
- Daniel 3:26, 27** All the government officials see that the men are not destroyed; they are not even singed or smell of fire.
- Daniel 3:28, 29** The King now forces everyone to worship the God of Heaven.