

Kingdom Down #3 - Find Jesus In Your Fiery Furnace

- All right, if you've got a Bible or you got a device, find Daniel 3. We are spending 12 weeks, one chapter each week in the great story of Daniel. Let me catch you up since we're at chapter three, let me summarize chapter one and two. Chapter one, the year is 605 B.C., so about 2,600 years ago in the Middle East. God's people are living in the nation of Israel, a promised land that He had designated for them. He also gave them leaders and commands to follow. They were disobedient, defiant, disregarding of God for 490 years. So God is super patient but eventually, his patience wore thin and just as He promised, He allowed them to experience judgment and justice with an invasion from a foreign army. It was from the nation of Babylon which is modern-day Iraq, led by a godless king named Nebuchadnezzar. So he plunders the temple, takes everything that belongs to the Lord and enslaves a number of God's people. They are forced to now make the 700-mile walk from Israel to Babylon. Included in that number is a guy named Daniel, whom the book is named after and three of his friends who are with him. They arrive in Babylon, they are chosen for the honor of serving in the king's court because they have high IQ, high EQ, they're good-looking and they came from royal families. But if you're gonna be in the king's harem, first we need to emasculate you, which is what they did to these teenage boys. So just consider this. Their vision was not I wanna work for the King, as a eunuch, vegetarian in Babylon. That was not their life goal, okay? And the question is how will they worship and serve God when they don't get the life they want? And that's the same for you and I. None of us will ultimately get the total life that we want and the question is, how will we respond? And these young men, they remain loyal to the Lord under incredible circumstances. They are renamed, they are brainwashed, they are sent to the University of Babylon, they're supposed to get a three-year undergraduate degree in demonology and then in chapter two, the king gets a dream and he can't interpret it. So he brings together all the guys from his sort of religious, spiritual advisory team. They can't interpret it, so he sends out a death sentence. From chapter one to chapter two is three years. From chapter two to chapter three is 17 years. So now we're 20 years into the life of Daniel, he's probably in his mid to late 30s at this point. Chapter two, he interprets the dream, he saves everyone's life, he gives the revelation to the king. He is promoted, his friends are promoted and everything is going according to plan because God has his servant in Babylon as a missionary. And what we're going to see in chapter three is that everything God creates, Satan counterfeits. It's a great mega theme of the Bible and this book of the Bible as well. God creates a kingdom ruled by King Jesus. Babylon is a counterfeit kingdom ruled by Nebuchadnezzar who's a counterfeit Jesus. So, you're gonna see a lot of these themes come and in the middle of it, Daniel and his friends, they have to choose between the real and the counterfeit and it takes discernment. We'll start in Daniel 3:1-3, looking at the counterfeit king and kingdom. "King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold," Babylon is the kingdom of gold, is what it was called, "whose height was 60 cubits." That's 90-feet tall. "Its breadth six cubits." That is nine feet wide. "He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon." Again, that is present-day Iraq geographically. "Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent together," and these are all the different political leaders, "the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates and all the

officials." All the commentators that I read said, we can't make any sense of this. Welcome to government, that's my point. Everybody gets a title and nobody knows what it means. All right, so welcome to government. "To the dedication," so it's a national ceremony, it's a national holiday, kids get school off, everybody's supposed to show up, "of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurer, the justices, the magistrates, Larry Curly Moe, all the guys, gathered together "for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up." So, here's the counterfeit king. King Jesus has a kingdom that He rules over politically and spiritually and ultimately, when our king, King Jesus returns, this was the promise in prophecy in the previous chapter, chapter two, that He is coming again. Daniel 7 shows us how on the clouds all of this is unfolding throughout human history in the narrative of Daniel but ultimately when all is said and done, Jesus will rule as king of Kings and Lord of Lords. As king, he will oversee that which is political. As Lord he will oversee that which is spiritual. Nebuchadnezzar determines that he doesn't want Jesus to come and he doesn't want Jesus' kingdom to come. So instead, he's going to set up his own counterfeit with himself as king. And because he has a nation that has conquered other people groups, those people groups, they're committed to their language, their tradition, their history, their religion, their family, their ethnicity. They're not primarily loyal to him as king and his kingdom. So what he determines is he will bring what we would call church and state together into one entity and that he would rule politically and spiritually and that he would rule over all peoples and they would worship Him as the Most High God. This is what dictators do. They want to eradicate the freedom of religion and religion becomes subservient to the state and then the state uses and manipulates the church or religious institutions and entities to create some sort of dictatorship and counterfeit kingdom. That's exactly what's going on here. He wants total control to rule over the lives of everyone. And this is kind of like a military parade. This is state theater, this is pageantry, this is all set up that he ultimately would be worshiped and as well, he sets up a massive statue of himself. Let me just say this. He did really good in self-esteem in elementary school. He woke up one day's like what the world needs is a 90-foot me, that's what it's missing. And it should be made out of gold. And so he really thinks that he is really God and rules as a god. And then the question comes, where does the gold come from? It may come from the fact that his troops looted, plundered God's temple took chapter one, the gold back to Babylon. He may have thought I am more powerful than your God. I stole his gold, I will melt it down, I will create a statue in my honor, showing that I am the most high god. It's 90 feet tall, it's on a plane, likely on a base. So now we're talking nine, 10, 11 stories high and if you lived in that day where most people lived sort of at ground level, this was a towering, magnificent sight to behold. This was one of the great wonders of the world. The counterfeit kingdom is ultimately him seeking to undo the prophecy that God revealed to him through Daniel and Daniel 2. If you remember last week, God gave him a dream through which Daniel interpreted it in a vision and it was that there was like a warrior king. His head was gold. That was Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. And then came a kingdom of silver, it would be the Medo-Persian Empire and then a kingdom of bronze. That would be the Greek Empire led by Alexander the Great and then lastly, the Roman Empire that was designated with iron mixed with clay. And so it's showing that ultimately, King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would go down and there would be a succession of kingdoms until

the Roman Empire came and then King Jesus would come in history under the rule of the Roman Empire. And Nebuchadnezzar thought I don't like what God says he's going to do, therefore I am going to rewrite history. I will not have a warrior king of multiple kingdoms. I will have one warrior king and my kingdom will rule forever. He's trying to be eternal. He's trying to set up heaven on earth which we all do. We're all trying to set up heaven on earth. We're all trying to find paradise, we're all trying to find that place where everything is according to our longing. Make no mistake. Nebuchadnezzar's heart is everyone's heart apart from God changing our heart. And he's trying to establish his kingdom and he's trying to undo history as God reveals it. So here's what you need to know. God tells us what is going to happen and no one can change that. The Bible tells us Jesus is coming back, He will set up a kingdom that never ends, you will rise from your grave and you will go to heaven or hell. Some people say I think we can fix that. That is the immovable future that God promises and the story of Nebuchadnezzar is, once God tells you what the future holds, it is absolutely written in stone and irrevocable. In addition, where does all of this happen? Modern-day Iraq. It goes all the way back, this place does to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, in chapter 10, there's a guy named Nimrod. Let me just say this. If you're like I wanna name my kid after something in the Bible, keep reading. Don't pick that one. That would be horrible for your kid. "You're in the Bible, Johnny." "Thanks dad, I love getting beat up at recess." Okay, so there's this guy named Nimrod and he sets up the first nation-state cult. And he does it in Babel. Genesis 11, he sets up the city of Babel which has in the center, a high tower, the Tower of Babel. It is the counterfeit kingdom, worshiping him as a counterfeit God, it's all demonic and evil. 1,500 years later in that same place, Daniel 1 calls it Shinar, that is ancient Bible or Babylon. 1,500 years later, the same spirit provokes Nebuchadnezzar to do the same thing as Nimrod, to set up a great city that is a counterfeit heaven on earth and that has a high place that shows the glory of man. All of this is not just physical, it's spiritual. There are in various times and seasons at work behind human history, supernatural forces at work which is why we see patterns through history because times and places and people change but the spirits working behind them remain the same. And here they are told bow down and worship this Idol made of gold. Question, have God's people failed at this previously?

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- They have. In Exodus, they are delivered from another counterfeit. His name is Pharaoh, another counterfeit kingdom. Right, it's called Egypt and they are delivered and they go out into the wilderness and they take the gold that they plundered from Egypt and they create a golden calf that they bow down and worship. Here, it is the same temptation and test and the same spirit at work behind that temptation and test. Three things I want to share briefly. Number one, only the real king knows and controls the future. God in chapter two said here's the future. Nebuchadnezzar in chapter three says I have an alternate rendering for the future. Only God knows and controls the future, the future that Nebuchadnezzar as the most powerful dictator on the earth tried to create, he did not have the power to do so because nothing can overcome an all-powerful God in his intent for the future. Number 2, everyone wants to be a king with a kingdom that they rule over in control. We all do. If you look at Nebuchadnezzar and are like "I

can't believe he did that." If you had his power and his money, well, you would be experiencing the same thing. Okay? This is where ultimately he wants to be a king, he wants a kingdom and he wants total control. He wants everyone and everything to do it the way that he wants. We all do this. Some of us try at work. We try to set it up so that we are in control. It doesn't work, we come home. We try to set it up that were in control, that doesn't work so then we coach Little League and bully 10-year-old boys. That's what we do in Scottsdale. We bully 10-year-old boys so that we are the king and they're under our dominion and we have control.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay? I'm gonna offend you and if I haven't, just be patient I'll get there in a moment. Number three, people who don't know God end up worshiping other people.

- [Congregation] Yes!

- And that's what he's saying. Everybody bow down and worship me, the image of me. The image of me. We're not supposed to worship a human being or the image of any human being. Colossians says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. If you wanna worship someone, worship Jesus. If you wanna worship the image of something, worship Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God. And that ultimately people that don't know how to worship God, they worship people. We call this fear of man, people-pleasing, co-dependent relationships. You are in control, I exist to meet your needs. Please don't pour out your wrath on me. I just live for your pleasure, how should I bow down? This is not just a Babylonian problem, this is a human problem. This is not just a historical problem, this is an eternal problem. In addition, they have counterfeit worship. We see that in Daniel 3:4-7 in the herald. So he's the counterfeit preacher. He's got my job, his job is to get up and talk. "The herald proclaimed aloud. 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations and languages, that when you hear the sound,'" and they're gonna go through the band so here's the counterfeit worship team. It's the counterfeit worship team, they're gonna have a counterfeit church. Here's the instruments, the horn, the pipe, the lyre, the trigon, if you know what that is, please tell me. Bring it, I'd love to hear it. "The harp, the bagpipe," so the Scot showed up, this is gonna get interesting real quick, "and every kind of music." And some people say why do we need to have a band? "Cause Satan does. Why do we need to have a sound system? Because Satan does, and I think that ours should be at least as good as our king is more worthy.

- Yeah.

- Right?

- If Satan's gonna throw a church, then we should throw a better church, that's what I'm saying. So bring your bagpipe. All right. "You are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." Let me just tell you that their worship really went to another

level on this occasion. Previously, there was some guys checking their phone, I wonder if the cardinals are gonna get a good draft pick, I wonder what's going on with the impeachment trials. On this occasion, they were all singing because it was two options, sing or burn, okay? We're singing, now we're not going to do that today but I would still like you to sing, right? Not because you're going into a fiery furnace if you don't but because of Jesus, you don't have to worry about any fiery furnace.

- That's right.

- Okay? Goes on: "Therefore as soon as all the people's heard the sound of the horn, the pipe, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, the bagpipe." But he keeps saying these instruments over and over. I think it's written by a guy who works at guitar center. He's really into the details, "And every kind of music, all the peoples nations and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up." Counterfeit preacher, he's the herald and he commanded counterfeit worship banned in church. Counterfeit Jesus, what he is saying is all peoples from all nations, tribes and tongues need to bow down and worship the great Nebuchadnezzar. This is the counterfeit Jesus. In Revelation 7 and Revelation connects with Daniel. Daniel tells us the future and then Revelation shows us the future. If you know the story of Revelation in chapter 7 verse 9. It says that there is a real king named Jesus ruling over a real Kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, seated on a real throne and being worshiped by people from all nations, tribes, tongues, languages and peoples. He just wants to be Jesus, he just wants to be Jesus. And he wants everyone to worship him as ultimately we were created to worship Jesus. And here, this is counterfeit evangelism. This is the demonic equivalent of a Billy Graham rally. You see, I love Billy Graham, he's with Jesus today, he's having a great day. Right, his faith became sight. He doesn't regret preaching Jesus right now, I promise you that. I got to meet Billy Graham when I was a college student. I got to go out and visit him just shortly before his death maybe a few years before. I'll never forget sitting at my first Billy Graham rally, stadium is full, tens of thousands of people. Unbelievable. They're singing and worship and proclamation and then everybody needs to publicly declare if they are going to worship Jesus. It was one of the most moving things I've ever seen in my whole life. This is the demonic equivalent of a Billy Graham rally. There are hundreds of thousands of people and then they make the altar call. Okay, who's gonna worship Nebuchadnezzar? You can't all come forward 'cause there's too many of you. Just bow down where you are and everyone who bows down, they are converting to the worship of Satan, demons and the Spirit of Babylon that ultimately is empowering the work of Nebuchadnezzar. This is incredibly, incredibly spiritual and what the herald says is convert or die. Convert or die. Some years ago, Grace and I had dinner with a dear man named Chuck Colson. He's since gone home to be with the Lord. He's a political leader who got saved later in life and talked a lot about Jesus and did some tremendous work. But as we're having dinner he said do you know the difference between Christianity and other religions? I said what might that be? He said Christianity is about proposition, other religions are about imposition. So it stuck with me. Imposition is convert or die. Proposition is what a man does when he wants to marry a woman. He proposes a loving relationship. Jesus proposes a loving relationship. He does not impose that kind of submission and surrender of the knee

without ultimately a surrender and submission of the heart. See what Nebuchadnezzar wants is outward, what Jesus wants is inward. You can make people obey but you can't make people love. They need to make that choice for themselves. This is the same spirit that is running Islamic terrorism, global jihad and things like Isis. They literally show up to the Christians and say in this same area of Iran and Iraq that the story takes place 2,600 years ago, that same spirit is still at work today, telling Christians convert or die. And many are being murdered and martyred. You need to know that you have a choice to make regarding who your God is and who you will worship. And He proposes a loving relationship. His is a kingdom based upon proposition, not imposition. Now, let me say this as well. Sometimes when we read older books of the Bible, we can think that this is just sort of interesting history but the Bible doesn't just tell us what happened but it tells us rather what always happens as I said because the same spirit is at work behind the scenes. I was in my study this week preparing the sermon and I felt like the Holy Spirit brought to my mind some images. I started seeing some things that I've seen over the years and all of a sudden, I realized that the spirit of Babylon is still at work. I'll show you. Korea, North Korea, does that look familiar?

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- North Korea. It is a spirit of Babylon state where the dictator rules as God and oversees that which is political and spiritual and you bow down to him or you die. Next slide. This is Turkmenistan. You may not know where it's at. Iraq which is Babylon. Iran which is next door which is Persia. Turkmenistan, next door. This is the king riding in on a horse to set up a kingdom. If you know the Bible, I'll just say this. That's a copyright infringement. That's exactly what that is. That's a copyright infringement. Jesus shows up on a?

- On a horse.

- On a horse. This is a counterfeit, same spirit at work. How about the next one? China? Look familiar? How many of you, your minds just exploded? Say how come these same things keep happening? Because the same spirits are still working. Nations change, kings and kingdoms change but the spirits don't. Last one. This was in Iraq. This was in Babylon. This was Saddam Hussein until his image was toppled and taken down. And now let me say something very offensive. That's not an apology, that's just a clue, okay? That's just a clue. All around the valley are Mormon temples. They are demonic counterfeits for the different Jesus. They have repositioned themselves as a church denomination. Go call us Mormons. Call us the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints. No, because the church of the people who belong to the real Jesus. On top of every temple is what? Golden angel Moroni, a demon in gold, in authority and dominion ruling over that place for the wrong kingdom. Just because you drive by it all the time, don't get too familiar with it. And have the heart of Daniel and his friends. They didn't hate Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon. They knew that their war was not against flesh and blood but powers, principalities and spirits and that they were there to love the Babylonians and bring them the love of God. Okay, pray for the temples, pray for your Mormon neighbors and friends and have the conversation about the real Jesus. Okay? Because we want them to meet the real

King and be part of the real kingdom and not under the demonic authority of a ruling and reigning counterfeit spirit that is literally the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, a spirit of gold ruling over a false religious service with a false band and a false herald and false evangelism. Cults are nothing more than counterfeits. And then Nebuchadnezzar is gonna set up a counterfeit hell. Here's the point. Satan is not creative. God is creative and creator. Satan not. He wears knockoff Jordans. He eats chips that are you know just plain bag. I mean, he just he can't come up with anything. Yeah, his Louis Vuitton, fake. Got into the swap market, not the real thing, right? Everything is a fake, everything is a forgery, everything is a counterfeit. Here he sets up counterfeit hell. Daniel 3:8-15: "Therefore at that time, certain Chaldeans," those are the Babylonians, "came forward and maliciously accused the Jews." You're gonna start to see anti-Semitism. "They declared to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever." He will. It's just not gonna go very well for him. "You, O King, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, the pipe, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, the bagpipe and every kind of music shall fall down and worship the golden image, your image. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace." Here's the problem. "There are certain Jews." Does this sound familiar? We have a problem with the Jews, can we throw them in the fire? He's Hitler. The same spirit working in Nebuchadnezzar worked in Adolf Hitler. We're having a problem with the Jews, let's put them in the furnace. It's not just what happened, it's what always happens. And this just tells you that human beings are not innately good and getting better, that we need a new heart and a new nature because here's the deal. I know this is gonna be shocking, but we would do the same thing if we have the same power. Let me just ask you this. If you could throw someone into a fire and have no consequence, who would that be? If anyone is on your list, you have the heart of Nebuchadnezzar. That's why Jesus tells us to forgive our enemies and let him deal with them. This is all a counterfeit. Goes on. "Whoever does not fall down to 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." If you're into "Veggie Tales", that's Rack, Shack and Benny. These three guys are ruling. "These men, O king, pay no attention to you." How dare they? "They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Next slide, please. "Then Nebuchadnezzar in a furious rage," so the king heats up and then he's gonna heat the furnace up it's all heating up, "commanded that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought. 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?'" It's ultimately a worship issue, everything is a worship issue. "Or worship the golden image that I have set up?" How dare you? I made this very simple. I brought in the band, I made the beautiful statue, that handsome guy. All you got to do is bow down, sing a few songs. Why is this so hard? I'm giving you another chance. I think that he knows that they are valuable, they have helped him and he doesn't want to necessarily kill them, so he's going to give them a second chance. "But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." And here's the issue. He's picking a fight with God, a fight you always lose. "And who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands?" Worship me or go in the fire. Those are your options. First question that comes up is where's Daniel? Okay, if you're gonna call in sick to work, this is the day. I'd love to come in, I heard I loved the band, the stat. Gold is my but I just, I got the flu, I don't wanna get

you sick, Nebby. We don't know where Daniels just gone, right? He's focal in chapters one and two. He's focal from chapters four through 12. He's absent in chapter three, his friends take center stage. Some say well maybe he was away on state business, representing the king and some kingdom affair. Maybe so. Someone in our Bible study suggested that maybe he really needed Daniel 'cause Daniel could interpret dreams and brought the power of God and was helping, a blessing to him because of God's presence. But he knew that Daniel wouldn't bow down and worship him, so maybe he sent Daniel off or sent him off to the sides so that he wouldn't have to put to death one of his chief leaders, I don't know. The moral the story is this. The test of good leadership is what the followers do when the leader is gone. That's the test. Daniel was the leader. He's listed first, he gets the interpretation of the dream, he calls prayer and praise meeting with his friends at the house, he's the leader. He's in the chief position, they are promoted to serve under his leadership. He's the leader. The test of leadership is what the followers do when the leader is gone. And let me just say, this is really a great parent, it's a great leadership lesson and ultimately, it's a great parenting lesson. That you and I are raising our kids like these boys to live in Babylon. And the question is what will they do when we are not present? This is where we need to raise our children to be wise and discerning and good in decision-making so that they can continue in the purposes of God, whether or not they are present with us. His friends are going to walk in the will of God even though they are not walking at this moment with Daniel. And their charges against these men are incredible. Now, if you'll remember it was Daniel and his friends to whom God revealed the vision that interpreted the dream and as a result these guys who are now calling for their death. The only reason that their lives were spared is by Daniel and his friends. So 17 years prior, they spared the lives of these men and then these men in return want to take their life. A lot of life is unjust, a lot of life is evil and many people don't appreciate what you do for them, that's the case here. But he gives them these three accusations. They disrespect the king, that's treason. They don't worship your gods, this is religious terrorism. Hey, we have a religion, we worship God. These guys bring in their own God. They think that our God is lesser than their God and that we should all bow down. This is like a religious, zealot, terrorist group in their mind and the number three, they won't bow down. They're publicly protesting. They're protesting. The counterfeit king here has got a real crisis on his hands because culture is one of two things. It's what you teach and it's what you tolerate. See, if you've got a family system and you say, "Hey, nobody gets to cuss out mom." You let one of the kids cuss out mom, you may be teaching one thing, tolerating another, what do you get, not what you teach, What you tolerate. He just said everybody worship me. That's what he's teaching. He cannot therefore tolerate three who will not bow down and worship him. And all leadership comes either from fear and control or love and influence. He is a leader working from fear and control. Our God is a God who works through love and influence. So he cannot give mercy like our loving king can because his is contingent upon an iron-fisted control and punishment for anyone who disobeys. So what he tells them is, you are going to get thrown into a furnace which is the counterfeit hell. I mean the whole book is God creates Satan counterfeits. chapter one, counterfeit communion, eat the king's food, drink the king's drink. Chapter two counterfeit, worship leaders trying to interpret the dreams that he had. chapter three, counterfeit king, counterfeit kingdom, counterfeit church, counterfeit evangelistic rally. Here we got counterfeit hell. Some critics of the Bible will say that's weird, where'd they get the

furnace? I'll tell you possibly where. From the melting down of the gold. It's not like they made a furnace. You need a furnace to melt the gold to create the statue. So likely nearby is the furnace. I did a little research. To get gold to melt, you need the temperature to be just right around 2,000 degrees. A wood fire can at most maybe burn a third of that temperature. Last night, Grace and I set out by the fire and I took a photo and sent it out to my friend, he's like "You ready for Daniel 3, huh?" Chuckle, chuckle, I was like I didn't think of that but yeah, I guess I am. I'm sitting here in front on the fire, getting ready for Daniel 3. We stoked a big hot fire and it radiated heat out but that fire was probably a couple of hundred degrees. The fire to melt gold is a couple of thousand degrees. Some this it was shaped possibly like a nuclear reactor, an opening at the top for the heat to escape, an opening at the bottom to shove the coal in because you need coal and lots of air movement to get anything to that kind of temperature. It's probably next to a hill so they could dump whatever in that they needed to and let escape whatever they needed to and that's where they bring them in and they're going to literally throw them into this burning fiery furnace that is going to be a couple thousand degrees. And again, as I told you this is the same spirit that was at work in Nazi Germany. We have a problem with the Jews, let's throw them into the furnace. Grace and I went to Germany some months ago. We visited the Protestant Reformation sites, Luther's House some other places and then we went to some of the museums to look at the history of Germany including Nazi propaganda and history. And then we went to a concentration camp. It was Sachsenhausen and it was for the housing primarily of political prisoners. Medical testing was done on human beings that is literally transformed what we would call the pharmaceutical industry and they used people as human guinea pigs. I mean they didn't consider people to be human. Apart from the teaching of the Bible, you don't think that other people's lives matter as much as yours and so you kill them when they're unborn and then you persecute them after they are born and all of that is the spirit of Babylon. And when we were in Sachsenhausen, it was just dark, it was demonic. And as we toured the barracks and looked at the facilities, it was kind of horrifying because it was surrounded with walls in which people were literally put in a fiery furnace and their ashes would rise up and the wind would carry it over the wall where the children of the guards lived and played. Next door on the other side of the wall, the guards lived with their wives, their kids. They had a pond, they had a park, they'd literally bring in rides and entertainment carnivals for the families and kids. It was beautiful, manicured grass. There are beautiful trees, it was heaven on earth. And on the other side of the wall was hell on earth. And these men would have breakfast in this environment, pass through the gate, take men women and children, put them in a fiery furnace. Their ashes would go up, the men would go home and the ashes would fall on their children playing at the park, not knowing that those were the ashes of the children on the other side of the wall. The Bible is true. We are not good people getting better, that we need an absolute new nature and a heart change at the deepest level from God. And we could look at people like that and say I can't believe they did that or we can be honest and say if I had their wealth and power, I would do the same thing to some people that I would like to get into my furnace. And this is where we need to be forgiven by the Lord Jesus. We need a heart change from the Lord Jesus and we need to forgive others and leave them to the Lord Jesus. This is where the only solution to the spirit of Babylon is the presence of the Spirit of God. Now the good news is there are real worshipers here. There are real worshipers but they are experiencing what we would call a lot of

heat. You're gonna see it in just a moment. They turn the temperature up and here's what the spirit of Babylon does. It'll just keep turning the heat up on you to get you to conform and bow down. And we use this language in our day. Hey, you know what? Turn the heat up on them, more pressure. That's what these men are experiencing and the pressure is to worship someone or something other than their God. And so what happens is the historians tell us that likely 300,000 people bowed down in an instant. Can you imagine just seeing that? 300,000 people bowed down except for three. That takes a lot of courage. 300,000 people bowed down, three guys stand up. We learned in chapter two that they already bowed down before the King of Kings, so they won't bow down before the false king. You're gonna bow down. You're gonna bow down to a false king or a real king. That's why the Bible says, "At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, both on the earth and under the earth." But ultimately, you and I, we wanna bow down to Jesus and no one and nothing else. And these people all bow down. Now let me ask you this. Were many of those who bowed down supposed to be believers in God's people? Yes. It just shows you that sometimes people who say they are believers, they will bow down in Babylon once they receive a certain amount of heat or pressure. They will compromise their convictions for peace and security instead of the presence of God. A couple of things I wanna say about this. Number one. Sometimes to be godly is to be lonely. If you cannot lose a relationship, if you cannot have conflict then you cannot worship God. Number two, when you respond to the spirit of Babylon, you need to respond by the Spirit of God. These men are not arrogant, they are not cantankerous, they are not malicious, they don't attack, they are humble, they are kind, they are gracious, they have the fruit of the Spirit so much so that even those who oppose them, still appreciate them and try to spare them. But I have good news. Here's the counterfeit king, counterfeit kingdom, counterfeit help. King Jesus, our King, the real king, he has a hotter fire. The Bible says that our God is a consuming fire and the Bible says in Luke 12, Jesus says, "I tell you my friends." See, Daniel had his faithful friends and Jesus wants you to be his faithful friend, so he calls you friends. "I tell you my friends, do not fear those who kill the body." You're two parts, a body and a soul. The body matters, the soul really matters because one day, life in the body ends and life in the soul continues. Jesus says do not fear those who kill the body and after that, have nothing more they can do. They can't touch your soul. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear Him who after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. What he's saying is the real king rules over body and soul. The counterfeit kings and kingdoms, all they can do is affect the body. They have no access to the soul. It's promised in Daniel 12:2 that multitudes that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, some to everlasting death. The point is when Jesus comes back, you will get your body back and your soul back. He rules over both, so don't fear primarily those who can only affect the body because Jesus has your body and soul. See, this is the hope of the believer. That's why the Bible says to live is Christ, to die is gain, that Jesus rules over all of it. So how do they overcome this tremendous fear of punishment? By the fear of the Lord. The Bible says that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." If you don't have fear of the Lord, eventually your fear will cause you to bow down to someone or something other than the Lord. They maintain to fear the Lord, so they were fearless in the face of persecution and ultimately, all of this is pressing and pushing to where they need to choose their king and they need to choose their kingdom. Daniel

3:16-23: "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.'" we told you no, we're not negotiating, we're not gonna have a reversible jersey and be a believer into Babylonian depending upon when it is convenient for us, right? We've made our decision, there's no reason to negotiate. "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." Here's what they're saying. our God can deliver us and even if He doesn't, we're still gonna worship Him. See, this is the heart of the believer. God can cure your cancer and if He doesn't, worship him.

- [Congregation] Yes!

- God can heal your marriage, and if He doesn't, worship Him.

- [Congregation] Yes.

- God can bring your wayward child home and if He doesn't, worship Him.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- God can improve your financial condition and if He doesn't, worship Him. What they're saying is our God can do anything but we can't make our God do anything. He is sovereign Lord over all, okay?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- How does Nebuchadnezzar respond? He was filled with fury. The expression on his face. He's got the angry eyes. "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." This just seems weird to me. Turn it on. Are you sure? Yeah. More, two. Take it up to two. Keep going, three. We're three, we're three. They get up to seven, oh it's seven. Seven times hotter. Let me just say, any temperature works, right? But he's really angry so what he wants is he wants the boiling in his soul to be the burning in their body. This is what happens when we pour our wrath on others. And he ordered some of the mighty men, tough guys, no neck. Dad didn't hug him, go to the gym, right? Tough guys like, "you making fun of me?" You don't know. Right, these were not the valedictorians, right? These are the inside linebackers that battle on high. Those guys. "He ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind." They're gonna tie these guys up. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Go up the hill dump them into the fiery furnace. "Then these men were bound," they didn't even take time to undress them. He's really upset. "Cloaks, tunics, hats and their other garments and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace." At least when they went to crucify Jesus, they stripped him. Here, they're in such a rush, they don't even take time to undress these men. "Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace was 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 tied up into the fiery furnace." Wow! Have you ever had life go in a way that you didn't want? Have you ever found yourself in a situation that was your greatest fear and everything was beyond your control? Those are the moments that you need to worship the most. And behind the whole narrative here, the issue is worship. Right? The whole issue is worship. And let me remind you of worship from God's perspective, the 10 commandments beginning in Exodus 20. God says, "I am the Lord your God, right. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness or anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or the water below. You shall not bow down," that's worship language, "to them or serve them, for, I the Lord, am a jealous God." Jealousy can be a bad thing. God's jealousy is a good thing. Jealousy is someone or something has taken my place. What God is saying is, I love you and I want a relationship with you. And if you bring in another God or someone or something else that you value equal or superior to me, it is adultery, that is not their place. That is not their place. God is jealous to have a faithful relationship with you and anyone or anything that takes precedence and priority over that relationship is a problem for him and should be a problem for you. And the point of the Ten Commandments is this. There's one God, worship Him alone. Those are the first two. The remaining eight are just applications and implications of the first two. If there's only one God and you worship Him, you won't worship sex and commit adultery. You won't worship your reputation and tell lies. You won't worship your possessions and steal money. If you obey the first two commandments, you will obey the remaining eight commandments. And it all comes down to worship and worship is who or what is at the center of your life? Who or what is on the top of your priority list? Who or what is your greatest pursuit and pleasure? Six things regarding worship. Number one, we don't worship God to get the results we want but to find God's will. Some people will say I tried Jesus and he didn't work. What do you mean? Well, I wanted something and he didn't give it to me. We don't worship God to get the results we want. We worship God to find His will.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- We worship God to find His will. For these men, it is the will of God that they go into a fire. That was not their will. Number two, we don't choose suffering but we choose God's will, even if it includes suffering. I'm not telling you to choose suffering. If Nebuchadnezzar would've come and said, I got a Jewish exception clause, you guys can all go on vacation, I would tell Rack, Shack and Benny to take the deal. Go find a hammock, put an umbrella in your drink and praise the Lord. Good, I mean if you don't have to suffer, don't. They're not seeking suffering but they're accepting God's will even when it includes suffering. Number three, if your goal is comfort and ease, you will eventually deny your God. At some point, to walk with the Lord will cause you to choose between comfort and Christ. And these men, if they bow down, they get comfort and ease. They get government jobs, they eat good food, their life is peaceable, everything is great except for their relationship with God. And ultimately, they sacrifice comfort and ease to worship God. Number four, you and I need to be very clear in our goal. Our goal is not to win, our goal is not to succeed, our goal is not comfort. Our goal is to be faithful to Jesus until we see Jesus and

we hear Jesus say, "Well done good and faithful servant." And if that means you gotta go through hell to get there, you go through hell to get there, because for these guys, this is as close to hell as they will ever be. But for Nebuchadnezzar, this is as close to heaven as he will ever be. For Nebuchadnezzar, all that awaits him is a furnace. For these men, even if God does not spare them, what awaits them is King Jesus on the other side of the furnace. Number five, someone will always show up in your life and demand that you bow down. I'm just telling you, there are people that want to be Nebuchadnezzar. "Do what I say, otherwise I will pour out my wrath on you, I'm going to turn up the heat to pressure you to bow down to me." This can be a boss, this can be a domineering spouse, this can be a bossy, bullying boyfriend or girlfriend, this can be a cruel older sibling. Just pick the option. And the point is don't bow down except for Jesus. What we saw in chapter two, they bowed down to worship God so now they can stand up to worship God. The question is knowing who to bow before and who to stand before. That ultimately, it's fine to bow before the Lord Jesus and that gives you the power and courage to stand before those who want to take Jesus' place and make you bow down. And number six, God will deliver you either from death or through death. When they say, "Our God will deliver us," that doesn't mean that we're gonna live. It means that He's going to deliver us from it and somehow do a miracle or He's gonna deliver it through us and we die and go to heaven and be with Jesus. Either way life or death, the deliverance is guaranteed though life and death are open to God's decision. And so God might get you around it but let me say, most of the time in the Bible, God gets you through it. Noah goes through a flood. Right here, Daniel and his friends go through Babylon. Jesus goes through the cross, that there is an escapist theology that basically says, if times are hard, God will get you out of it. No, God will get you through it. It's how it works, much if not most of the time. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," through it, don't get a flight over it. Have to walk through it. God will deliver you from death or God will deliver you through death. Now what's happening here, the men get thrown in the fire, they're fully clothed. There's only one thing that they bring into the fire with them that gets burned up. What is it? The robes of Babylon. Everything that belonged to the believers was untouched. The one thing that belonged to the Babylonians was burned up. In the fire, a couple of guys did get burned up. It was the unbelievers. The point is that there is a greater fire coming in the end and it is the unbelievers who will experience it, not the believers. The Babylonians are the one that burn up in the fire. And then something awesome happens. The real king, King Jesus shows up the whole theme and thread of Daniel is getting us to King Jesus and the kingdom of God so we can live kingdom down. The real king shows up. Daniel 3:24-30: "Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished." Right. Throw guys in the furnace and you see him walking around, it's a thing, it's the thing. He's astonished and rose up in haste. This guy never gets off his throne but this is sort of a shocking moment. "He declared to his counselors, did we not... Hey guys, like did anybody else count three? I counted three, was it? Check the clipboard, right? Was it three? Could've sworn it was three. Did we not cast three men down to the fire?" They answered and said to the king, true. Okay, yes. Yeah we're all governmental officials, we double-checked. The Oversight Committee convened and yeah, it was three for sure. "They answered and said to the king, 'True, O King.' He answered and said, 'But I see four that's in the fire.'" Before Nebuchadnezzar got off his throne, Jesus got off his throne and Jesus came down and got into it with his people. Here's what I need you to know. Jesus gets into things that

nobody wants to get into and He stands with people that nobody wants to stand with.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay, so the real King is like who the heck is that? This just Nebuchadnezzar hurting my kids, I'm gonna come down and save them and show him who the real king is. And Nebuchadnezzar was like that's crazy, who's the fourth guy? Some people say what about those that have never heard about the Lord? Let me tell you God can show up in some extraordinary and supernatural ways. Jesus shows up to Nebuchadnezzar and he still doesn't convert. Some of you say if Jesus were alive in my lifetime, I would be a believer. Now Jesus has already shown up in your life, I'm telling you that. And you need to believe. You need to believe. "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." Actually, you're close, sir. It is the Son of God. His name is?

- [Congregation] Jesus.

- It's Jesus. "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace." He didn't get too close. He got about Scottsdale in July? About that hot. He got about that close, he's like okay, this is about all we can endure here. I'm gonna stay here because when you get older, you can't see. So he's there looking at what's going on in that fiery furnace? "He declared, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.'" Still bossing people around. "Servants of the Most High God." He's not converting, he's playing both sides. He's reversible jersey, home team, away team, whichever one's winning, that's the one I'm cheering for. "Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire. The satraps, the prefects, the governors, the king's counselors, they all gathered together and saw that the fire had not any power over the bodies of those men. The hair on their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, no smell of fire had come upon them." How many of you guys have camped? You sit by the fire, what do you smell like?

- Fire.

- Babylon. And these guys nothing. Nothing! Nebuchadnezzar answered and that was a good one, come on. "Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, 'Blessed be the god of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,'" He wants God to benefit him though he doesn't want to worship him, "'Who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted 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.'" He's still not mercible. "'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 ruin.'" So he's still not Jesus. "'For there is no other god who was able to rescue in this way.'" Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon." Okay, this is a intense story. Let me tell you one funny thing, then we'll get serious again. You just need a little break. Okay, so it says that the hair was not singed. I'll give you a story. I don't cook for health and safety reasons. Okay, I believe in Jesus but if I eat

everything I cook, I'll see him sooner than I was hoping. I am not a cook, but recently one morning, I wanted to have an egg, so I tried to cook an egg. One egg, okay? And I'm cooking the egg, Grace comes downstairs she's like, what's that smell? I was like I don't know. She's like what's burning? One egg. I said I don't know, I didn't burn the egg. What I noticed was I burned all the fur off my fingers in my hand. My mom's a Wookiee, my dad's a chia pet and I grow a lot of fur. Somehow in a gas oven, I just went to flip an egg and if you could see, this is prepubescent mark and this is post-pubescent mark. I shouldn't have said it like that. But I burned all the fur off my hand. Here's what I'm saying. I can't cook an egg without singeing my fur. These guys go into an oven, a furnace that can go 2,000 degrees and nothing. You know what that is? A miracle. Some people say I don't believe in miracles because we can't test and retest them. By definition, that's what a miracle is. We're gonna keep throwing people into pizza ovens and see if a miracle is possible. That's why we call it a miracle not a Tuesday. It's unusual and it doesn't happen all the time. This is a miracle of God. Okay, back to the story. Today, we would criticize these three men. Oh they got promotions, they're working for the Babylonian government, oh, their lives are great. Daniel's like the vice-president and they're like his chief counsel. Oh, they've sold out. Can you imagine the blogosphere and social media today? The point is love and serve your nation and be a witness to the love of God and be a good citizen up until the point that you cannot be a good Christian. They loved the Babylonians and they loved Nebuchadnezzar and they want them to know God's love, though they do not agree with Babylon. And God ultimately promised that he would preserve them in Isaiah 43:2-3 says: "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior." There's a chapter in Hebrews 11 where it gives those who have great faith and it mentions these men. It says they quench the power of fire. Who shows up with them is Jesus This is called the theophany, that means God shown or God revealed. When God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the garden during the day, that's a theophany. God shows up. Abraham interacts with three men in Genesis 18 and one of them is the Lord whom he worships, his God. That's Jesus. Jacob wrestles all night with the angel of the Lord. An angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is an angel, the angel of the Lord. Angel means messenger, is Jesus and he wrestles with Jesus all night. When people encountered Jesus' theophanies in the Old Testament, they tended to worship and build memorials saying surely God has visited us here and this is the place of God. So this is a theophany. Now what's interesting, Nebuchadnezzar is saying, I'm gonna rewrite the future. There won't be a warrior king of four kingdoms that leads to King Jesus. There will be Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. The book concludes chapter 12, Daniel is in his 80s. So it goes from his teens to his 80s. By that time, Daniel will outlive Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Daniel will outlive Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. And then comes the Medo-Persian kingdom and then comes the Greek Kingdom and then comes the Roman Empire and everything he was seeking to halt ultimately came to pass as God promised and prophesied, and Jesus Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords is born under the Roman Empire just as prophesied and that was governed and ruled by the spirit of Babylon. And then while Jesus is conducting His ministry, Satan who is behind the spirit of Babylon shows up and gives Jesus the same test of Daniel 3. He shows Jesus in Matthew 4. He says here are all the kingdoms of the world, I am the king of them all. It will all be yours if Jesus you will do one thing."

- [Congregation] Bow.

- Bow down and worship me. Bow down and worship me. Jesus was given two options. Bow down and worship Satan and rule as the second-in-command from the Daniel seat, over all the kingdoms of the earth, that is the pleasure path. Or the pain path; suffer, go to the cross and die a humiliating death so that you can be raised from the dead, and seated at the right hand of God the Father, ruling and reigning in the kingdom of God. God the Father and Satan gave him both the same offer. Second-in-command, worship me, rule the kingdom. This is the pleasure path, this is the pain path. Jesus, like Daniel and his buddies, chose the pain path because that was the will of God. And what happens then, Jesus actually quotes Daniel 3. Some people ask, did Daniel actually exist, did he write this book? Jesus quotes Daniel 3 in Matthew 13:41-43. "The Son of Man," you'll get to know him in Daniel 7, it's Jesus favorite title for himself, "will send angels and they will gather out his kingdom, all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace." There is a real fiery furnace. Jesus talks about Hell more than anyone. "In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears, let him hear." Jesus tells us that there is a fiery furnace at the end of time. And then Jesus lives without sin and He is constantly opposed and harassed, falsely accused by those who are working with the spirit of Babylon under the Roman government. And then Jesus does something for you that is even greater than what He did for these three men. What He did for these three men, He got into it with them. What He did for you, is He went alone in your place. Jesus didn't drag us to the cross to endure the wrath of God. They went into the furnace to endure the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar and Jesus stood with them. When Jesus Christ went to the cross to endure the wrath of God, He didn't stand with us, He stood for us. And He endured the full wrath of God. He dies, He is buried and then just as these men walked out of the fiery furnace, so Jesus walked out of His tomb. Jesus ascended into heaven where He is ruling and reigning as King of Kings, Lord of lords coming again to bring a kingdom that never ends. In the meantime, what does Daniel mean for you? It's very curious that Peter, Jesus' lead disciple says this in 1 Peter 1:6-7: "You have been grieved by various trials." Let me ask you today, what grieves you and what trial are you in? "So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold." Nebuchadnezzar's greatest possession was gold. For the believer, our greatest possession is faith. You cannot take gold with you into the kingdom of God but you will take faith with you into the kingdom of God. You need to know that your faith is more important than your gold. "More precious than gold that perishes though, it is tested by fire," he's using the language of Daniel, "may be found to result in praise glory and honor that is worship and bowing down at the revelation of second coming of Jesus Christ." Here's what he says is this. Just as Nebuchadnezzar and the spirit of Babylon was seeking to destroy these men through some sort of fiery trouble, so Satan is going to turn up the heat at times in your life, seven times hotter and you will find yourself in some sort of furnace of affliction. Have you been there?

- Yeah.

- Have you been there? We've each got our fiery furnace. For some of you, it's marital, financial. For some of you, it's spiritual, for some of you it is familial. We've all got the furnace we're in. And you feel it. You feel the heat. And what he's saying is this. That same fire that the enemy wants to use to consume you, God will use to purify you. And the way that they would purify gold, they would heat it up and then take the dross out. What he's saying is you have genuine faith but there's some dross in it, there's some Babylon in it, there's some flesh in it, there's some selfishness in it and sometimes what God allows is a bit of a furnace of affliction and it purifies our faith. And now we know that we know that we know that we know that we can trust in the Lord Jesus and here's the good news. Whatever fiery furnace you find yourself in, Jesus Christ comes to stand with you in it and to purify your faith, which is more precious than gold. And I don't know what you're in, but sometimes you don't even see Jesus till you are in the furnace. Sometimes, you don't even know that you need Jesus until the heat is turned up. And some of you need to know, you need to know, you need to know He will never leave you, He will never forsake you, He will be with you always, even to the end of the age, even through the fiery furnace.

- Yes!

- Amen.

- So we're gonna worship Him. Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Father God, thank you for an opportunity to teach the scriptures. God thank you that the Bible tells us not just who you are but who we are. It doesn't just tell us what happened but it would always happen and it shows us behind the scenes why it's happening and ultimately, who is ruling over it all. Lord God, you rule over generations, nations, empires, leaders. You rule over individuals. Lord God, you know every hair on our head and when all is said and done, not one of your children will have a single thread singed. Lord Jesus, we thank you that this is the closest to hell as we will ever be and we pray for those who don't know you, that this would not be the closest to heaven that they would ever be. And Lord God, I pray right now, just comfort and peace of your presence. Lord Jesus, it is not the absence of trouble but it is the presence of our king that gets us through this Babylon, in Jesus' good name. Amen.