

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Daniel's Friends in a Furnace

Daniel 1 - 3

### Opening

Gathering: Name people who stood up for their faith under great threat to their lives or livelihood.

Today's Focus: Daniel and his friends remained faithful to God despite great risk to their positions and lives by opposing the king of Babylon. God protected and blessed them in response.

Key Verses: *We will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.* Daniel 3:18

*God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. ...it will itself endure forever.* Daniel 2:44

Opening Prayer

### Lesson

Babylon (*Genesis 11*)

How old was the city of Babylon? = Maybe world's oldest city  
Genesis 10:8-10 (1, 6) = Founded by Nimrod, Noah's great grandson

What famous building was supposedly built in Babylon?

Genesis 11:2, 4-5, 8-9 = Tower of Babel

Located on Euphrates River, 50 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq

Surrounded by 60 miles of walls up to 300 feet tall & 87 feet wide

Old Babylonian dynasty - Amorites in 2000-1600 BC (time of the patriarchs)

Then ruled by Hittites, Kassites, Assyrians

Neo-Babylonian Empire founded in 625 BC by Nabopolassar, a Chaldean (from northeast Arabia)

Allied with Medes (with Cyaxares) to conquer Assyria; Sent son, Nebuchadnezzar, to lead battles

Nebuchadnezzar took throne when his father died in Sept 605 BC

Built empire into top world power; Very successful conqueror, builder, administrator

Where did Nebuchadnezzar get his power and what was his reputation?

Habakkuk 1:6-7 = God raised up Babylon; Ruthless, feared, self-promoting

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by son, Evil-Merodach in 562 BC who reigned 2 years

Neriglissar reigned 4 years; Labashi-Marduk reigned 1 year; Nabonidus took over in a coup in 555

Nabonidus retired to Teima in Arabia, left his son Belshazzar in charge

Cyrus the Mede (Persian) conquered Belshazzar & Babylon in 539 BC

Although powerful, expansive & famous, Babylonian Empire only lasted 86 yrs

The First Deportation (*2 Kings 24*)

When did Judah first become subject to Babylon? = 605 BC, Soon after Nebuchadnezzar became king  
2 Kings 24:1 = Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah during Jehoiakim, Judah made vassal 3yrs

How did Nebuchadnezzar respond when Jehoiakim revolted?

Daniel 1:1-2 = Nebuchadnezzar captured Jehoiakim & temple items and took to Babylon

What did Nebuchadnezzar take back to Babylon with the first exile?

2 Kings 24:13-16 = Anything & anybody of value were deported to Babylon

What prophet was taken into exile with Jehoiachin? = Jehoiakim had just died

Ezekiel 1:2-3 = Ezekiel began prophesying while in exile in Babylon (5 yrs after exile)

Israelites began speaking Aramaic in Babylon, Hebrew before exile = Daniel has both Hebrew & Aramaic

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### Nebuchadnezzar's Advisors (*Daniel 1:1-7*)

What did Nebuchadnezzar do with the well-educated and capable men he captured?

Daniel 1:3-5 = Had them trained and put into service as advisors & officials

Who were some of these men in the group of Judah captives?

Daniel 1:6-7 = Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah (~16 yrs old)

What did their names mean? = Top 4 Babylonian gods: Chief-god, sun-god, earth-god, fire-god

Daniel = God is my judge

Belteshazzar = Bel's prince (Bel was chief god of Babylonians)

Hananiah = The LORD is gracious

Shadrach = Inspired by the sun god

Mishael = Who is what God is? (Who is comparable to God?)

Meshach = Kept first syllable, Added Shak for goddess Sheshack

Azariah = The LORD helps

Abednego = Servant of the fire god

### Picky Eaters (*Daniel 1:8*)

What problem did the four from Judah have with their special treatment?

Daniel 1:8 = Didn't want to eat the royal food and wine

Why was this a problem? = First portions were offered to gods

Exodus 34:15 = Don't treaty with others, they'll invite you to eat their sacrifices

Ezekiel 4:13 = People will eat defiled food in places where I send them

Do we need to be careful about eating potentially defiled food?

Romans 14:14-15 (1 Corinthians 10:25-28) = No food is unclean, don't eat if bothers others

### Food Test (*Daniel 1:9-21*)

Did the official just tell Daniel to eat what was put in front of him?

Daniel 1:9-10 = No, but he was afraid Nebuchadnezzar would get mad

How did Daniel convince the official to let him eat what he wanted?

Daniel 1:11-16 = After 10 day test with veggies & water, the 4 were healthier than others

How did the four from Judah test out after the 3 year training?

Daniel 1:17-20 = Blessed by God, they were 10 times better than any other royal advisors

How long did Daniel remain in Babylon?

Daniel 1:21 = Until Cyrus of Persia (spanned Babylonian Empire)

### A Dream for the Wise Men (*Daniel 2:1-12*)

What troubled Nebuchadnezzar during his second year?

Daniel 2:1-3 = He had a dream that troubled him, wanted to know its meaning

Why did the wise men have trouble explaining the dream? = Book is Aramaic from here through Daniel 7

Daniel 2:4-6, 10-11 = Nebuchadnezzar also required them to tell him the dream

How did Nebuchadnezzar respond when the wise men said they couldn't do it?

Daniel 2:7-9, 12 = He distrusted them and sentenced all to death

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### Daniel's Opportunity (*Daniel 2:13-28*)

Who was included in the group to be put to death?

Daniel 2:13-15 = Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego

How did Daniel stop the mass execution?

Daniel 2:16-19 (16-25) = Got another day, prayed with friends, God revealed mystery to him

How did Daniel reply when Nebuchadnezzar asked him to reveal the dream?

Daniel 2:26-28 (26-30) = Only God in heaven can reveal mysteries

### Four Kingdoms (*Daniel 2:31-43*)

What was the dream?

Daniel 2:31-35 = Statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron/clay broken by rock that filled earth

What did the dream mean? = Declining value: despotism to democracy, Stronger: larger & longer lasting

Daniel 2:36-40, 42 (36-43) = Four declining world powers (Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman)

Head of Gold = Babylon began the string of empire builders; Identified in Daniel 2:38

Value of Gold = Nebuchadnezzar exercised unrestricted authority, his word was law

Gold is Weak = Babylonian empire only lasted 86 years

Lion in vision of Daniel 7:4

Chest & Arms of Silver = Medo-Persia; Identified as ram in Daniel 8:20

Value of Silver = Added restriction that even the king could not repeal his own law (Daniel 6:12)

Silver Stronger than Gold = More territory and lasted 208 years with 11 kings

Bear in vision of Daniel 7:5

Belly & Thighs of Bronze = Greece; Identified as shaggy goat in Daniel 8:21

Value of Bronze = More republican form of government

Bronze Stronger than Silver = Even more territory and lasted 260-300 years

Leopard in vision of Daniel 7:6

Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron/Clay = Rome

Value of Iron/Clay = A democratic republic

Iron Stronger than Bronze = Largest territory & longest existence

Iron/Clay Mixture = Rome eventually branched into 10 kingdoms, never able to reunite (v 43)

Toes of clay / iron = Some kingdoms were weak as clay while others were strong as iron

Terrifying Beast in vision of Daniel 7:7

### The Rock (*Daniel 2:44-45*)

What was the rock?

Daniel 2:44 (44-45) = Kingdom that would last forever, never be destroyed

What kingdom was this referring to?

2 Peter 1:11 = *The eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

### Nebuchadnezzar's Response (*Daniel 2:46-49*)

How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel's explanation? = Praised Daniel's God,

Daniel 2:46-49 = Made Daniel governor and head advisor; Made S/M/A officials

What kind of reputation did Daniel get among the Judah exiles?

Ezekiel 14:13-14 (20) = In same righteous league as Noah and Job

Ezekiel 28:3 = Known for his wisdom

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### Nebuchadnezzar's Statue (*Daniel 3:1-23*)

What did Nebuchadnezzar do to make a point that he was now in charge? = Not Assyrians nor his father  
Daniel 3:1-2 = Built 90'x9' gold statue, ordered important people to the dedication

Sam Houston statue in Huntsville is only 67-ft tall (largest American hero statue in world)

Statue likely of Nabu – the god he was named after = Name meant *Nabu, protect my boundary*

How did he use the statue to test his subjects? = Allegiance to Nabu indicated allegiance to Neb.

Daniel 3:4-6 (3-7) = Ordered everyone everywhere to bow & worship statue when band played

How did this help the wise men who were jealous of the four from Judah?

Daniel 3:8-9, 12 = They turned in Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego for not bowing to the statue

Did Nebuchadnezzar accept the accusation?

Daniel 3:13-15 = He gave the three a chance to be guilty or innocent before him

Did the three save themselves by bowing to the statue?

Daniel 3:16-18 = No, they stood up for their faith

Why did they make such a big deal about bowing to a statue?

Exodus 20:3-6 = Directly opposed God's first commandment

How did Peter later repeat the reply of Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego?

Acts 5:29 = *We must obey God rather than men!*

Did Nebuchadnezzar change his mind about his egotistical law?

Daniel 3:19-23 = Had furnace heated 7x hotter & threw them in, soldiers killed by heat

### Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah in the Fiery Furnace (*Daniel 3:24-30*)

Furnace was probably a lime kiln

Walkway to opening in top for adding raw materials; Opening at bottom for extracting fused lime

What happened to the three men in the blazing furnace?

Daniel 3:24-27 = They were protected and kept unharmed by God's angel

How did Nebuchadnezzar interpret what he saw?

Daniel 3:28 = That God had sent his angel to rescue the three

Did Nebuchadnezzar give up his other gods and turn to God?

Daniel 3:29 = No, he stayed *polytheistic*, but prohibited offenses against god of Hebrews

How did he deal with Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego?

Daniel 3:30 = Promoted them

### Closing Prayer

### Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I taken a stand for my faith when others around me found it easy to go with the flow?  
(*Daniel 1:8-16; Luke 16:1-5; Acts 5:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6; 1 Timothy 5:22*)
2. How do I feel about working for ungodly people? (*Daniel 1:3-4, 19-20; Genesis 41:41-46; Esther 4:14; Matthew 22:15-21; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Peter 2:13-19*)
3. When have I stood up for my faith at my job and refused to do what others saw as part of the job?  
(*Daniel 3:16-18; Psalm 1; Luke 3:12-14; 5:27-32; 19:1-10; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Peter 2:11-12*)
4. Do I take credit when I use God's special gifts or do I use them as opportunities to glorify God?  
(*Daniel 2:27-28, 47; 3:28-29; Genesis 41:16, 28; Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 12*)
5. What statues have I built in order to receive honor from others?  
(*Daniel 3:1-7; Matthew 6:1-18; 23:5-7; Acts 5:1-11; 8:18-24; 2 Corinthians 10:12-18; 12:7-10*)