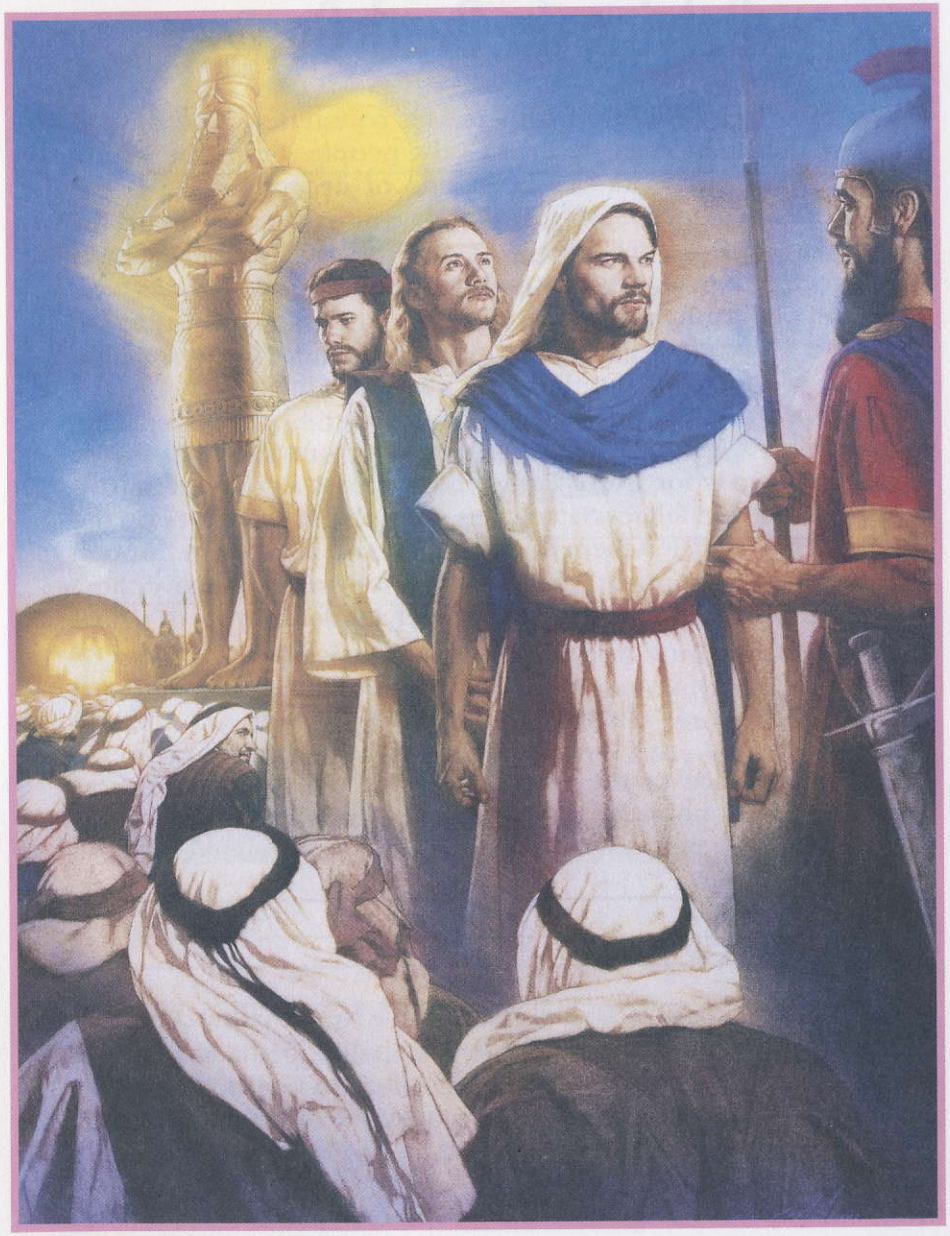
Unsealing DANIEL'S MYSTERIES

3

WITH MARK FINLEY

Defying the Death Decree



ADVENTURES IN BIBLE PROPHECY



3

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, and it is worth dying for! Our faithfulness to Christ and His truth will finally determine our eternal destiny.

Today's lesson reveals the cost three young Hebrews were willing to pay for truth. Rather than accept a counterfeit, disobey God, and fall for Satan's lies, they placed their lives on the line. Their faith led them to the flames, and it led them through the flames triumphantly. In today's lesson we will discover how we ourselves can have this death-defying faith in earth's final hours.

Challenged by the Counterfeit

1. In defiance of the true God, what did Nebuchadnezzar build on the plains of Dura in ancient Babylon? Daniel 3:1.

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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 succeeding 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.

2. What command did the king give the representatives from his entire kingdom? Daniel 3:3-5.

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

3. What penalty did the king threaten to impose on those who failed to obey his urgent commands? Daniel 3:6.

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Please note this fact clearly. 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.

4. What specific commands would the Hebrew youths violate if they bowed down to the image? Exodus 20:3-6.

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The book of Revelation describes a decree, which will be passed at the end of time, similar to the decree in Daniel 3. Please read Revelation 13:15-17 and note the similarities between the two edicts.



ILLUSTRATION: NATHAN GREENE

• *The three Hebrew youths were placed in a trying position. Preserving their loyalty to God meant being disloyal to Nebuchadnezzar.*

• *Astonished, Nebuchadnezzar saw four men loose in the flames—not three men bound.*

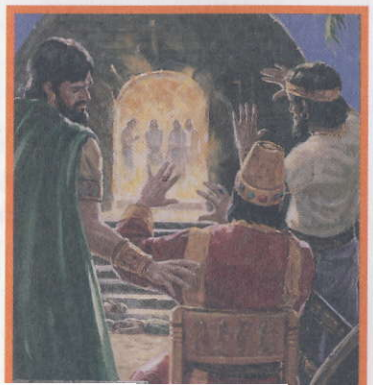


ILLUSTRATION: JOHN STEELE, PPPA

a. In each instance, a powerful world leader uses the power of the state to enforce his decrees.

b. In each instance, the central issue revolves around worship.

c. In each instance, the ultimate penalty is death.

5. What specific instruction does the apostle Peter give us in Acts 5:29?

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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 the individual conscience and God. The 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.

Commitment at a Cost

6. What choice did these Hebrew youths make? Daniel 3:16-18.

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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 18). The old English word *careful* means hesitant. They were settled. 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.

7. What was the result of their decision? Daniel 3:19-21.

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They were thrown into the fiery furnace "bound." Apparently alone, they faced death.

8. As Nebuchadnezzar peered into the flames expecting to see the Hebrews immediately consumed, what surprising question did he ask? Daniel 3:24.

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Comforted by Christ

9. What did the king see? Daniel 3:25.

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Nebuchadnezzar 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 that was consumed were the bonds which bound them. In the trials of life, Jesus is also there. In the heartaches of life, He is there. When we go through the flames, He is there. Here are some marvelous promises of encouragement for our times of trouble.

- "Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" Isaiah 41:10.
- "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you" 1 Peter 5:7.

- "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" Romans 8:28.

10. What promise did God give David, the psalmist? Psalm 34:7.

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11. What title is Jesus given in Daniel 3:25?

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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.

12. What effect did the three Hebrews' loyalty have upon Nebuchadnezzar? Daniel 3:28-30.

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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!

My Decision

- ❑ I choose to be loyal to Christ now and at the end time.
- ❑ I choose not to compromise my convictions to conform to others around me. I would rather be faithful to my Lord.