

Daniel 3

## Aim of Lesson

To show that God is able to save those who trust and obey him.

## Background study

Read Exodus 20, the first three commandments.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Question the class about the name of the king of Babylon, the dream he had, and the meaning, which Daniel had explained to him. Remind the children that the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar's empire. The next thing we learn about Nebuchadnezzar is that he had an enormous golden statue set up in a prominent position for all to see and to worship. The statue was three times as high as a house and could no doubt be seen for miles, particularly when the sun shone upon it. The rulers of the provinces were assembled at an impressive dedication ceremony of the vast statue, amongst whom would have been Daniel's three friends.

Introduce the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and ask the children to try and memorise them. Use these three names at intervals throughout the story, so that the children automatically come to repeat them. Similarly, repeat the list of musical instruments each time they appear, in the same order in which they are written, since children take pleasure in such repetition, and their attention is held.

Nebuchadnezzar was not content for the people simply to admire his statue. He ordered that they must also bow down and worship it. This the Babylonians were willing to do, because they were accustomed to worshipping idols. But to Daniel and his friends, and all the other devout Jews, the idea of worshipping an idol was abhorrent: God had expressly forbidden it. Ask the children to find and read the first three commandments for themselves. In the minds of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there was no question of disobeying God's laws, despite the threats of punishment.

Clearly some of the Babylonians resented Daniel's three friends, because of their promotion to positions of authority, and would have been delighted to see them brought down. They aroused the king's anger by informing against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But the conviction of the three Jews was so strong that even in the face of the king's rage they remained calm and unafraid. They expressed their confidence that God could save them, yet they did not presume that he would do so, and were prepared to die if necessary rather than offend God. Nebuchadnezzar's previous declaration of God's greatness had been meaningless for he now defied the power of their God to save them.

Once more, however, Nebuchadnezzar was shown that his power was as nothing compared with that of the true God. He could not deny the evidence of his own eyes. Convey to the children the wonder of the miracle: not only were the three men unharmed, but they had also been protected from any after effects of the fire. The presence of the angel, whose appearance was that of a man, had ensured absolute immunity. Nebuchadnezzar was again impressed, and there followed a reversal of his former attitude. His people were forbidden, on pain of death, to speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and the three men were to be admired and respected. They were also given greater responsibilities in Babylon.

## Relevance to the children's lives

The Babylonian empire was very splendid and much admired. Can we admire the king of Babylon? Why not? What was the king's worst fault? (pride). Can people who are "big-headed" be pleasing to God?

## Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

## Prayer

Dear Lord God, it is easy for us to think well of ourselves, and not so easy to be humble. We need you to teach us of your greatness. Help us to worship only you. Amen.

## Memory verse

"I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3).