

Daniel – An Old Testament Major Prophet, 1:1 – 3:30

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All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

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Date: 605 – 536 B.C.

Purpose: To comfort the people of God by demonstrating that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of men (1393).

Luther on Daniel: Daniel came to Babylon some years before the destruction of Jerusalem [*which took place in 587 B.C.*], during the reign of King Jehoiakim. ...Nebuchadnezzar brought some of the best people back with him [to Babylon] (including Daniel)...

From this book [of Daniel] we see what a splendid, great man Daniel was in the sight of both God and the world. ...he not only prophesies of Christ, like the others, but also reckons, determines, and fixes with certainty the times and years. Moreover [*in the second half of the book of Daniel*] he arranges the kingdoms with their doings so precisely and well, in the right succession down to the fixed time of Christ, that one cannot miss the coming of Christ unless one does it willfully....

In the sight of the world, too, Daniel was a splendid and great man.... Though Daniel was never a king, and never had great wealth or honor out of it, nevertheless, he did possess and perform the functions, duties, and offices of a king....

...among all the children of Abraham, none was so highly exalted in the world as Daniel. Joseph was indeed great in Egypt with King Pharaoh. David and Solomon were great in Israel. But they were all little kings and lords compared with the kings of Babylon and Persia; and it was among these that Daniel was the chief ruler.

...the prophecies of Daniel, and others like them, are not written simply that men may know history and the tribulations that are to come, ...but in order that the righteous shall be encouraged and made joyful, and strengthened in faith and hope and patience. For here the righteous see and hear that their misery shall have an end, that they are to be freed from sins, death, the devil, and all evil—a freedom for which they yearn—and be brought into heaven, to Christ, into his blessed, everlasting kingdom (1393-1394).

Apocalyptic: Daniel's style is often described as *apocalypsis* (Greek, "revelation"), a category of literature defined by modern scholars as writings that include dreams or visions, unusual symbolic imagery, number symbolism, and interest in end-times events (1395).

Blessings for Readers: As you read Daniel, take to heart the example of this great leader of God's people who devoted himself to God's Word amid the disappointments and temptations of exile. ...cling to this general message: your God reigns, and He works to deliver you from evil, especially in the gift of His Son, Jesus, the Anointed One (9:24–26) (1395).

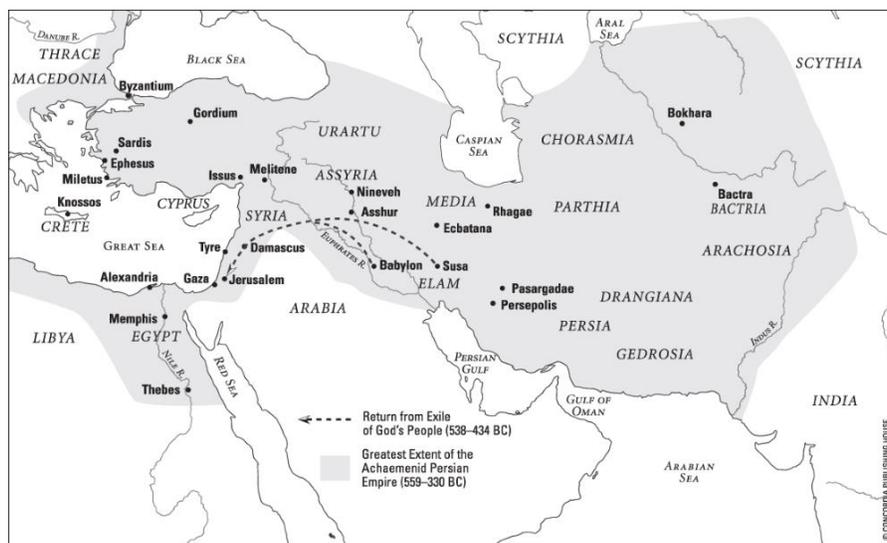
Outline: Daniel is particularly easy to outline. Each chapter is a separate section. The only exception is the last section, which covers chapters 10–12. In chapters 1–6, Daniel describes what happens to him in the third person ("he"). In chapters 7–12, Daniel describes what happens to him in the first person ("I").

- I. Judeans Steadfast in Practicing Their Faith (ch 1)
- II. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: Four Kingdoms and the Establishment of the Kingdom of God (ch 2)
- III. God's Faithful Servants Are Rescued from Death (ch 3)
- IV. Nebuchadnezzar Judged for His Arrogance against God (ch 4)
- V. Belshazzar Judged for His Arrogance against God (ch 5)
- VI. God's Faithful Servant Is Rescued from Death (ch 6)
- VII. Daniel's Vision: Four Kingdoms and the Establishment of the Kingdom of God (ch 7)
- VIII. Daniel's Vision concerning the Post-Babylonian Kingdoms (ch 8)
- IX. Daniel's Prayer and Vision concerning Jerusalem during the Post-Babylonian Kingdoms (ch 9)
- X. Daniel's Vision concerning the Post-Babylonian Kingdoms (chapters 10–12) (1395).

Daniel Taken to Babylon (1:1-7):

A Summary from The Lutheran Study Bible (1397): God punishes unrepentant [King] Jehoiakim and allows many Judeans to become exiles in Babylon. Yet Daniel and his friends will learn that the Lord is still in control, even though they are in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (chapters 2–6). God will protect the young men and use them to glorify His name (1397).

1. When were Daniel and others brought to Babylon: ¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah [he reigned from 609-598 B.C.], Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...
2. Why were they brought to Babylon: ³ ...the king commanded...his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans [an ancient name for the Babylonians].
3. What food and drink were they assigned: ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Why were captives treated in that manner: ...well-trained servants could advise the king regarding the governance of their home territory and their conquered countrymen (1397).
4. Who were the key people and their names: ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called **Belteshazzar**, Hananiah he called **Shadrach**, Mishael he called **Meshach**, and Azariah he called **Abednego**.



Daniel's Faithfulness (1:8-21):

5. Daniel did what was right and God blessed him: ⁸ ...**Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself** with the king's food.... Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And **God gave Daniel favor** and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "...why should [the king] see that you were in worse condition than the [others]? So you would endanger my head with the king."
 - a. Will you share a time when you chose God's way over the world's way? _____

 - b. Are God's ways always best, even if the outcome is unpleasant? Y N
6. Daniel proposed a test: ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward... ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you... ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance...
7. Their abilities were God-given: ¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.
 - a. Do you have some abilities? Y N
 - b. Do you acknowledge God as the Giver and use them in His service? Y N
8. Their abilities were recognized by the king: ¹⁸ At the end of the [three years]... ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.
9. Daniel's time in Babylon: ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.
 - a. So Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C., 18 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587.
 - b. Daniel remained in Babylon until 539, the year the Persians **"conquered Babylon and allowed the Judean exiles to return home (Ezra 1:1-4)" (1398).**

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:1-16):

10. An impossible assignment for the king's wise men: ¹ In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams... ² Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams.... ³ And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." ⁴ Then the Chaldeans said to the king... Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." ⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins.... ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand..." ¹² Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed.
 - a. Whenever we seem to be in an impossible situation, what should we do? _____
 - b. Gabriel said to Mary: "...nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37 ESV).

11. Daniel is a picture of Jesus as God used Daniel to save the others: ¹³ So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. ¹⁴ Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion... ¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

- a. Daniel approached the king with wisdom and caution.
- b. Daniel did what He could; then relied on God to do the rest.

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:17-30):

12. Daniel asked others to pray and thanked God for His answer: ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

- a. Do you have needs? Ask your brothers and sisters in Christ to pray.
- b. Have you been blessed? Don't forget to give thanks to God!

13. Daniel gave the glory to God: ²⁴ ...Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon.... ²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." ²⁶ The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. ³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king..."

- a. We should never take credit for what God has done.
- b. We can be instruments of God, like tools in His hands, but He gets all the credit!

Daniel Interprets the Dream (2:31-45):

14. God enabled Daniel to state the dream: ³¹ "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image.... ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand [*indicating Divine intervention*], and it [*the Holy Christian Church*] struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ ...But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ "[That] was the dream."

- a. Most of our dreams are probably meaningless.
- b. Long ago God did use dreams to show people the future. Can you name some important people in the Bible who had significant dreams? Genesis 28: J _____; Genesis 37: J _____; 1 Kings 3: S _____; Matthew 1-2: J _____.

15. God enabled Daniel to state the interpretation: Now we [apparently Daniel and his three friends] will tell the king its interpretation....³⁹ **Another kingdom** inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet **a third kingdom** of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.⁴⁰ And there shall be **a fourth kingdom**, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom [so after the death of Alexander the Great, the empire was divided among his generals]...⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed...⁴⁵ ...A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

- a. The four kingdoms seem to be Babylonia, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
- b. Kingdoms rise and fall; God establishes them, sustains them, and ends them.
- c. The greatest kingdom is *the kingdom of God*, which shall endure forever.
- d. We are blessed to be citizens of the USA, but we are much more blessed to be citizens of heaven (*Phil. 3:20*)!

Daniel Is Promoted (2:46-49):

16. The faithful are blessed:⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel...⁴⁷ The king...said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon....

- a. Note how God changed the king from *rage and murder* to *respect and praise*!
- b. Daniel, *when being honored*, did not forget his faithful friends.

Before we move into chapter 3, let's consider the chronology of the book. This chart, by Billy Humphrey (<http://billyhumphrey.com/2013/08/08/organizing-the-book-of-daniel-chronologically/>), which is based on the various kings mentioned in Daniel, will help us to understand the time in between the events. *Note that the order is chronological, rather than by chapter.*

1. Chapter 1 – Refuses King's Delicacies, 605 BC under Nebuchadnezzar
2. Chapter 2 – Great Golden Image, 603 BC
3. Chapter 3 – Golden Statue/Fiery Furnace, 587 BC under Nebuchadnezzar
4. Chapter 4 – Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment, 571 – 562 BC
5. Chapter 7 – Four Beasts, Little Horn, Ancient of Days, 553 BC
6. Chapter 8 – Ram and the Goat, 551 BC
7. Chapter 9 – Seventy Weeks, 539 BC
8. Chapter 5 – Writing on the Wall, 539 BC
9. Chapter 6 – Lion's Den, 538~534 BC under Darius
10. Chapter 10 – 12 – King of the North and King of the South to 1335 days, 534 BC

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image (3:1-7): Based on the information above, take note that there were 16 years between the events of chapter 2 and chapter 3 – *time for the king to forget what happened.*

17. The gathering and the order: ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold [**“Probably of the Babylonian god Bel” (TLSB, 1401)**], whose height was sixty cubits [*90 feet tall*] and its breadth six cubits [*9 feet across, in diameter*]. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather... [all the various officials] to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ Then... [they all came] And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.”
18. The punishment for non-compliance: ⁶ “And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” ⁷ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of... every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- Where in the Bible does God tell us to *not* bow down? _____
 - If you were in that assembly, what would you do? Why? _____
 - Who should we fear / reverence / respect the most (Matt. 10:28)? Why? What will be the result? _____

The Fiery Furnace (3:8-30):

19. The accusation: ⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously [*spitefully*] accused the Jews [*possibly because of what is recorded in 2:49*]. ⁹ They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears... every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”
- I have been falsely accused, you probably have too; we cannot prevent that.
 - However, let us follow this instruction: ^{ESV} **1 Peter 2:12** “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”
20. A second chance and a challenge: ¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.... ¹⁴ ...“Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready... to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”
- Second chances can be good, *but that was a second chance to sin against the true God.*
 - The king believed that no one could deliver them; but Jesus said to a doubting father, whose son was possessed by an evil spirit: “All things are possible for one who believes.” [Then the father said:] “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23-24 ESV)

21. The bold reply of God's faithful servants: ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar.... ¹⁷ ...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. ¹⁸ But if not [*if we die in the furnace*], be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

- a. The initial refusal to worship the false god was bold; then, in their face-to-face encounter, they refused again – fully aware of the fiery consequences. "Burning was an ancient method of execution (Lev. 20:14; 21:9)" (TLSB, 1401).
- b. They knew God could deliver them, but they did not know if He would spare their physical lives or not. We should always trust in the Lord and do His will; then leave the consequences in His hands.
- c. Most people who are being put to death actually die, even those who trust in the Lord. Yet when they die, their bodies are at rest and their souls and spirits are with God in paradise. As believers we are called to love Jesus and God's gift of eternal life more than we love our physical bodies and this life on earth (Rev. 12:11). This is a *most powerful example* of unwavering faith in the face of a horrible death (THIS IS SO DIFFICULT THAT YOU MAY CHOOSE TO SKIP IT): ^{NRS} **2 Maccabees 7:1** It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and [straps], to partake of unlawful swine's flesh [*"...the pig...is unclean to you" (Lev 11:7 ESV).*]. ² One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." ³ The king fell into a rage, and gave orders to have pans and caldrons heated. ⁴ These were heated immediately, and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. ⁵ When he was utterly helpless, the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in a pan. The smoke from the pan spread widely, but the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, saying, ⁶ "The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his song that bore witness against the people to their faces, when he said, 'And he will have compassion on his servants.'" ⁷ After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair, and asked him, "Will you eat rather than have your body punished limb by limb?" ⁸ He replied in the language of his ancestors and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. ⁹ And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." ¹⁰ After him, the third [and so on]... "... ³⁷ I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, ³⁸ and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation." ³⁹ The king fell into a rage, and handled him worse than the others, being exasperated at his scorn. ⁴⁰ So he died in his integrity, putting his whole trust in the Lord. ⁴¹ Last of all, the mother died, after her sons. ⁴² Let this be enough, then, about the eating of sacrifices and the extreme tortures.

22. The execution attempt: ¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated **seven times more** than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego [*proving that the fire was extremely hot*]. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "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."

- a. The three may have hoped for God's rescue before being cast into the fire; however, isn't it amazing that God did not spare them from the fire *but saved them in spite of the fire*. We recall the burning bush: "...the angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2 ESV).
- b. We don't know what appearance distinguished the fourth from the other three, but it must have been a striking difference. We cannot say for sure who the fourth person was, but it was probably the same One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, *thus the Angel of the Lord*; in other words, the Son of God before He put on human flesh in the Person of Jesus – who lived without sin and was punished for our sins!

23. A radical change of heart: ²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was **not singed**, their cloaks were **not harmed**, and **no smell of fire** had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: 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 ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

- a. The account of the three men in the fiery furnace is recorded for our benefit. Even today, as Christians in many countries are threatened with torture and death, the Lord is calling us to continue to trust in Him, to love Him more than life, and to be faithful to Him and His Word – even unto death.
- b. If threatened, will we remain faithful? Jesus said to His disciples: "When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Mt. 10:19 ESV). So let us ever grow up in knowing God's Word, trusting in Jesus, living for Him, and having God's peace!