

Daniel 3:16-19 ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. ¹⁹ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

- There is no guessing as to the message of this familiar Bible story, as **Babylon has always been the archenemy of God's people throughout man's existence.**
- At the time of Daniel's writing, the city of Babylon had reached the height of its glory in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, about 600 years before Christ. He made the city splendid with canals, temples, palaces, famous streets such as the Processional, fortifications such as the Ishtar Gate, and of course, the Hanging Gardens, which were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- The empire of Babylon had been founded centuries before by **Nimrod**, the "mighty hunter" (mighty rebel, mighty in sin) according to Genesis 10:8-10. The name Nimrod became a proverb for a great apostate or evil rebel against God. Nimrod had a wife named **Semiramis**. According to ancient legend, Nimrod was violently killed but then reincarnated in the son of Semiramis. Thereafter known as **Tammuz**, Nimrod was also worshipped in Babylon as "El-Bar," or "God the Son."
- This story of Semiramis and Tammuz was known to the Greeks as Athena and Apollo, to the Romans as Venus and Mars, and to the Egyptians as Isis and Horus. The Assyrians called her Ishtar and her son Tammuz, and the Phoenicians who inhabited Palestine called her Astarte and her son Baal. This primeval Babylonian myth became the source of many of the occult mystery religions of the ancient world. The worship of Astarte involved offering incense and weeping for forty days until they celebrated the resurrection of Tammuz by exchanging Astarte eggs.
- **Babylon was more than a place!** This mysterious Babylonian cult was a continual temptation for the children of Israel. The prophet Jeremiah confronted the idol worshippers in Israel who were still burning incense to Astarte and offering a host, a wafer of bread, to honor "the queen of heaven."
 - **Jeremiah 7:18** *The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.*
- Later, the prophet Ezekiel was taken by God into a secret chamber of the Temple to observe the occult worship of the pagan mother Astarte and the child Tammuz.
 - **Ezekiel 8:14** *Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.*
- Did you ever wonder how such rank idol worship ever became part of the Roman Catholic Church, especially when God's Word is so vehement in its condemnation of images? When the Roman Emperor Constantine supposedly converted to Christianity in AD 313, all he really did was **amalgamate** every heathen religion in his empire under the name Christianity. The people still worshipped their pagan gods, but now called themselves "Christians." The ancient Babylonian pagan mother and her resurrected son were now renamed as "Mary, Queen of Heaven, and Jesus, God the Son." In most cases, they didn't even bother to change the statues they were worshipping!
- The key to Babylonian worship has always been the exaltation of the individual to become his own God. The very word "Bab-el" means "the gate of God," and this is basically what those first Babylonian citizens of Genesis 11:1-9 were trying to build when they constructed their famous tower – **A MAN-MADE WAY TO GET TO GOD**. God brought confusion to their languages in order to scatter them, but Babylon has been working feverishly to **re-unify itself** against God ever since!
- Both the political and religious aspects of Babylon will continue to war against the true people of God until the "world government" and the "world church" are defeated by God, as recorded in Revelation 17 & 18. **Babylon is a powerful opponent, but Babylon will be defeated!**
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't realize it, but they were to become players in an ancient cosmic war between God and Satan when they first heard the command of Nebuchadnezzar:
 - **Daniel 3:4-6** ⁴ Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, ⁵ That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: ⁶ And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

- Nowhere are we told that this image was an image of Nebuchadnezzar himself. It is always referred to as "the image that [he] set up." Since worshipping the image is obviously connected to worshipping Babylonian gods (Daniel 3:12, 3:14, 3:18), this image was undoubtedly not a likeness of Nebuchadnezzar himself, but of the gods he served.
- **Babylon was the originator of the Trinity!** It began with Nimrod, Tammuz and Semiramis – the King/Father, the Prince/Son and the Queen/Mother. As a result, all ancient heathen religions developed their own "triad" or "trinity." Later, the Babylonian symbol of the "dove" for the Mother Goddess would be changed to represent the Holy Spirit by the framers of the Nicean Creed in AD 325. But, as current Catholic practice will reveal, Mary is in reality the third person of their trinity!

BABYLON'S TRINITY IN ANCIENT RELIGIONS		
First Person Father / King	Second Person Son / Prince	Third Person Queen / Mother / Dove
TRIAD OF BABYLON		
Nimrod	Tammuz	Semiramis
TRIAD OF EGYPT		
Osiris	Horus	Isis
TRIAD OF GREECE		
Zeus	Apollo	Athena
TRIAD OF INDIA		
Brahama	Vishnu	Shiva
TRIAD OF ROME		
Jupiter	Mars	Venus
TRIAD OF BACKSLIDDEN ISRAEL		
Baal	Tammuz	Ashtoreth
TRIAD OF CATHOLICISM		
Father	Son	Holy Spirit / Dove

- **The strong call to unity in worship around a man-made idea of a tritheistic God, instead of the One True God, originated in ancient Babylon!** This idea entered Israel when they backslid! And this idea entered the Christian Church when they backslid in the time of Constantine! They were so tired of persecution that they welcomed the relief his "Edict of Toleration" brought them!
- **THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CHOICE BETWEEN "THE IMAGE" AND "THE FIRE"!**
- Nebuchadnezzar was serious about his threat of destruction should the three Hebrew boys not submit. The "furnace" was the preferred method of tortuous death in Babylon; even Jewish kings had been captured and put to death in this manner. He would tolerate no exceptions to his decree!
 - **Jeremiah 29:22** *And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;*
- But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego wouldn't bow because joining the crowd around the image would have violated the first two of the ten commandments given by their God.
 - **Exodus 20:2-6** ² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
- If the image was indeed a triad of gods, bowing would have also violated the **SHEMA** ("Shema Yisrael" – "Hear, O Israel") that the three boys had learned since their childhood:
 - **Deuteronomy 6:4** *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*
- Jesus called this the first (the preeminent, chief, principle) commandment!
 - **Mark 12:29** *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:*
- Nebuchadnezzar had taken measures to make the worship of the image palatable to all of his subjects. The ceremony was attended by beautiful music that drowned out any "reservations" the captives from other nations might have – **EXCEPT FOR THE THREE HEBREW BOYS!** They weren't the only Jewish captives in the crowd, but even though others bowed all around them, they stood tall – and alone! **"Everybody else is doing it!"** But that didn't matter to servants of God!

- People that refuse to bow down shouldn't expect to be complimented for the courage of their convictions! In fact, the opposite usually occurs – they are rejected as holier-than-thou Pharisees, legalists who simply don't understand that "unity" should be more important than "doctrine."
- **What the Babylonian religion doesn't understand is that God's commands refuse even to BEND – not even when it is expedient! TRUTH CANNOT BE CHANGED EVEN SLIGHTLY, OR IT BECOMES ERROR!** The three Hebrew boys heard a nobler music than Babylon's!
- God had commanded their forefathers, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). Furthermore, the boys remembered Israel's recent history, under the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, when God had delivered their small nation from a much larger multitude:
 - **2 Chronicles 14:11** *And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude.*
 - **2 Chronicles 20:15** *And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.*
 - **2 Chronicles 32:7** *Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:*
- It was a multitude that rebuked the blind men crying out to Jesus:
 - **Matthew 20:31** *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.*
- It was a multitude that chose Barabbas, the popular Zealot, over Jesus:
 - **Matthew 27:20** *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.*
- **Multitudes are often wrong! There is only one multitude I am interested in being part of!**
 - **Revelation 7:9-10** ⁹ *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ¹⁰ And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*
 - **Revelation 19:6-9** ⁶ *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*
- **But when you don't bow, YOU STAND OUT!** Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could have said, "We will just conform outwardly. We will bow with our bodies, but continue to serve God in our hearts. After all, it's the heart that matters." But they knew that attitude would not please God!
- The weapon of the world is no longer CRUELTY, but CONTEMPT; no longer TORTURE, but RIDICULE. Notice that it was not Nebuchadnezzar who noticed them standing, but "certain Chaldeans" (Daniel 3:8). **The people who opposed them were others who bowed!**
- When they are brought before the king, they are given another chance – "Just say you blundered, that it's not an issue, and we will do the ceremony again for your sakes." Although the young men answer the king politely, they stand firm in their convictions.
- **It is when they refuse to compromise that the wrath of the king is incurred.** He orders the furnace heated SEVEN TIMES HOTTER than normal. This is not strictly a numerical expression, but rather a figure of speech portraying "utmost intensity" – as hot as possible – a raging inferno!
- **Their immortal declaration is "We know God is able to deliver us, BUT IF NOT WE STILL WILL NOT BOW!"** They did not know the miracle that God was going to perform; they did not know whether He would honor them before the heathen king. They were just standing for TRUTH!
- Some people say, "I will serve God if He helps me," or "I will walk through the fire if God delivers me from the pain of the fire." That is never the feeling of the true people of God. They will walk through the fire whether it hurts them or not, because they know **truth lives in the fire!**
 - **Job 13:15** *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*
 - **Isaiah 42:1-2** ¹ *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. ² When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

- **We live in the last days, when secular Babylon has made the furnace "seven times hotter!"**
- The devil has launched an all-out attack of sin against the world in an effort to destroy mankind!
- The Canadian divorce rate has increased more than five times since the late 1960's.
- Single parent families in Canada have increased over 35% since 1981. 81% of teen mothers are single.
- By age 19, 96% of Canadian males and 68% of females have engaged in sexual intercourse.
- Nearly half of the Canadian teenagers who become pregnant now end that pregnancy in abortion. Our current abortion rate wipes out the equivalent of more than 2500 school classrooms every year. We abort one of every five children conceived in our country – more than 100,000 last year!
- Abortion was supposed to eliminate child abuse ("every child a wanted child"). Instead, the number of abortions has risen nearly 700% since 1971, bringing with it an increase of child abuse cases – a staggering rise of over 1700%!
- Every year, Canadian abortionists kill enough babies to populate the city of Saint John, and Canadians abuse enough children to populate the city of Fredericton. Child care professionals attribute most of this to the lower value we've placed on children in our society. Since most abortions are for reasons of convenience, respect for human life is devalued. Rather than being wanted, children are now disposable – both before and after their birth!
- Over 20 different and dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are rampant among the young. STD's represent 36% of all notifiable diseases in Canada. The CDC estimates that there are now 1 million cases of HIV infection in the U.S.
- The rate of heterosexual HIV transmission has increased 44% since September 1989. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) infect 3 million teenagers annually. 63% of all STD cases occur among persons less than 25 years of age.
- 1.3 million cases of gonorrhea occur annually; some strains are now resistant to penicillin. Syphilis is at a 40-year high, with 134,000 new infections per year. 500,000 new cases of herpes occur annually; 17% of the U.S. population ages 15-74 is infected, totaling more than 25 million people – among some groups the infection rate is as high as 60%. 4 million cases of chlamydia occur annually; 10-30% of 15-19 year-olds are infected. There are now 24 million cases of human papilloma virus (HPV) - this virus alone kills nearly as many women each year as die of AIDS.
- Violent youth crime increased by nearly 120% since 1986 – double the rate of increase for adults.
- The most violent ghettos are not in South Central Los Angeles or in Southeast Washington, DC, but on television! About 350 characters appear each night on prime-time TV; studies show an average of 7 of them are murdered every night. If this rate applied in reality, then in just under two months the entire population of North America would be killed. More than 60 major university studies show that violent images on TV lead directly to violent behavior in real life.
- The suicide rate for youth ages 15-19 has increased by over 600% since 1955 – they literally have no reason to live!
- **But all that is nothing compared to the pressure that religious Babylon is exerting!**
- **The Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring (ORPM)** has recently been proposed in a bill called the "Freedom from Religious Persecution Act" by Frank Wolf and 26 other US congressmen. Appointed by the US president, and under the administration of the UN, it will control all religious practice and worship on the planet. The office will evaluate all religions, approve or disapprove credentials for all ministers, establish national standards of acceptable religious practices, bring sanctions and penalties against individuals or churches who do not comply, punish any who commit "hate crimes" by asserting that their deity is exclusive or superior to others, forbid financial contributions to religious groups that are not "approved," seize property of those engaging in "unauthorized" religious activity, target "spiritually defective" individuals who refuse ecumenical religious unity for criminal prosecution under "hate crime" acts, work closely with law enforcement agencies to insure that religious unity laws are enforced, and guarantee every American "freedom" from dangerous and radical religious sects.
- **The Religion and Cultural Diversity Conference** was held in July 1997 in Melbourne, Australia and included dignitaries from world's most prestigious religions, New Age foundations and World Councils. The conference saw the one cardinal sin of any religion as being ABSOLUTISM. Belief in absolute truth was decried as pride, refusal to embrace others, separatism which tended towards warlike aggression, bigotry and spiritual blindness. The predominant recommendation was that Interfaith training and dialogue must be embraced by all religions, with no exceptions. Religious disunity was blamed for most of the earth's ills. One address viciously attacked "fundamentalist Christians," calling them "mean-spirited, authoritarian, dictatorial and sometimes quite terrifyingly powerful, violent, aggressive, pathological and dangerous." This presenter said that fundamentalists go about "brandishing their floppy Bibles like weapons." The address finished with these remarks: "It is characteristic of Christian fundamentalism to adopt an isolated and socially divisive position ... most fundamentalism is an expression of what we call 'tribalism'."
- **The one-world church**, in the making for over 150 years, was institutionalized as the United Religions Organization, or UR, in June 1997. It should be fully in place by June 2000, and globally operational by June 2005. The head-quarters will be at the Presidio in San Francisco. It is patterned fully after the UN, and its stated mission is to structure a world religion using the common denominators of all the world's religions, while eliminating divisive elements.

- **Pope John Paul II** repeatedly tells his weekly audience of visiting Christians at the Vatican that "Christian unity will not become a reality unless all churches accept the authority Christ entrusted to St. Peter and his successors." He told charismatic delegates of their 4th International Conference in Rome that "full ecumenacy means total unity with the Roman Catholic Church or Unity under the Papacy; the leadership and authority of the pope in the absolute sense."
- Buried in the heavy philosophical wordage of **the Pope's most recent encyclical letter** (called "Faith and Reason") is the pontiff's concern about what he sees as a form of "fideism" or "extreme faith." He labels it "biblicalism," in which the study of the Bible becomes the sole criterion for truth. This is in direct opposition to the Catholic Church, which puts "revelation" from the church on equal par with the Bible. This is also the trend in most charismatic circles, but it is in direct opposition to the Word of God. Scripture stands alone as the final source of God's revelation!
- **THE FURNACE HAS DEFINITELY BEEN HEATED SEVEN TIMES HOTTER!**
 - **John 15:18-21** ¹⁸ *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*
- But it was when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to enter the fire – without any assurance of deliverance from their trial – that the miracle happened!
- The men who threw them into the furnace were slain – but the fire didn't touch them!
- They "fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace," but Nebuchadnezzar was amazed to see them rise up "loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt."
- In Heaven, God said, "Those are brave boys; I think I'll go down and stand by their side." On earth, Nebuchadnezzar said, "I see four men ... and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."
- When Nebuchadnezzar called them, they came out of the fire by themselves – without their bonds! The only thing they lost when they stood up for God's truth was their bonds! **There is freedom in the furnace when God is in the furnace with you!** They were LOOSED in the flames!
- When they came out of the fire, everyone "saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (Daniel 3:27) – because the fire couldn't touch them!
- **God did not save them FROM the fire – He saved them IN the fire!**
- This resulted in a testimony to the entire nation of Babylon, a chance for the world to hear about the only God "that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3:29)
- **IN OUR DAY, THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO BOW ...**
 1. "You've got to be a Babylonian to win a Babylonian."
 2. "Everyone else is doing it – the majority must be right."
 3. "Don't throw away your opportunities by being inflexible."
 4. "We can do more good if we're not ostracized over a minor issue."
 5. "We can just believe that inwardly without making an issue of it."
 6. "This is more than God should expect of us."
- **The other extreme is to hide from the crowd to avoid the fire.** Not the three Hebrew boys! They were found boldly unbowed in honor of the One True God. They were "in the world, but not of the world." They conversed with Nebuchadnezzar, but politely refused to compromise with Nebuchadnezzar. **All you need to do is stand up, and you will definitely stand out!**
- **Why is the fire so much hotter today? BECAUSE SATAN KNOWS THAT HIS TIME IS SHORT!**
- Satan is indeed a powerful and vicious opponent, but he labors under one crippling fact – he faces a dreaded sentence of eternal imprisonment without the possibility of parole! He works under this terrifying reality every moment of his existence, and he knows that this is his last chance!
- Don't be ignorant of his devices – every time you pray, obey God, etc. his wrath is stirred up!
- **Jesus ties Satan's fall not only to Calvary's victory, but to the exploits done by His disciples!**
 - **John 12:31-32** ³¹ *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

- **Luke 10:17-20** ¹⁷ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. ¹⁸ And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
 - **Revelation 12:10-11** ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
- **Every time you stand up, Jesus is lifted up – and Satan is cast down!**