

Daniel 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Analysis

The phrase "whoso falleth not down and worshipping" uses emphatic negative construction, making compliance mandatory without exception. The threatened punishment "shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" emphasizes immediate, irrevocable judgment. The Aramaic *sha'tah hada* (ܫܐܬܗ ܗܕܐ, "the same hour") indicates instant execution without trial or appeal, demonstrating Nebuchadnezzar's absolute power and the decree's totalitarian nature.

This verse illustrates how earthly powers demand exclusive allegiance that properly belongs only to God. The command to worship "the golden image" violates the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:3-5), placing believers in direct conflict with state authority. The passage teaches that civil disobedience becomes necessary when human law contradicts divine command, establishing a principle that guided early Christian martyrs refusing to worship Caesar and continues informing faithful resistance to unjust laws.

The immediate, severe punishment for noncompliance reveals the high cost of faithfulness in hostile contexts. Yet this very extremity creates the context for God's miraculous deliverance and testimony to His power. Human tyranny, pushed to its limit, becomes the stage for divine intervention that glorifies God before unbelievers. This prefigures the greater deliverance Christ accomplishes—rescuing believers from Satan's tyranny and the fiery judgment of sin through His atoning death.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (likely overlaid with gold rather than solid gold due to its size—90 feet tall) stood on the plain of Dura near Babylon. The public dedication ceremony assembled provincial officials throughout the empire, creating a mass demonstration of political and religious unity. Ancient Near Eastern kings regularly used religious ceremonies to consolidate power and enforce loyalty, making refusal both religious apostasy and political rebellion.

The "burning fiery furnace" (atun eshsha yaqadta) was likely a brick kiln used in Babylon's extensive building projects. Archaeological evidence confirms Babylonian use of large kilns capable of housing multiple people, making execution by fire technologically feasible. This horrific punishment method served as public spectacle deterring dissent while demonstrating royal power over life and death.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. When does obedience to earthly authority end and civil disobedience to maintain faithfulness to God become necessary?
2. How can you prepare spiritually for potential conflicts between cultural expectations and biblical commands before crisis forces immediate decision?

Interlinear Text

וְיָמֵן	דִּי	לֹא	יִפֹּל	וְיִסְגֹּד	בֵּה	שָׁעָתָא
And whoso	H1768	not	down	and worshippeth	H0	shall the same hour
H4479		H3809	H5308	H5457		H8160
אֵתְרֵי	לְגֹא	אֶת־וְ	נוֹרָא	יִקְדָּחָא:		
be cast	into the midst	furnace	fiery	of a burning		
H7412	H1459	H861	H5135	H3345		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:50 (Parallel theme): And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:42 (Parallel theme): And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Jeremiah 29:22 (Parallel theme): 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;

Daniel 3:11 (Worship): And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:15 (Worship): Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Revelation 9:2 (Parallel theme): And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

Revelation 14:11 (Worship): And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

