

God promises to be with us in the furnace.

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." Daniel 3:25 (ESV)

... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior... Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)

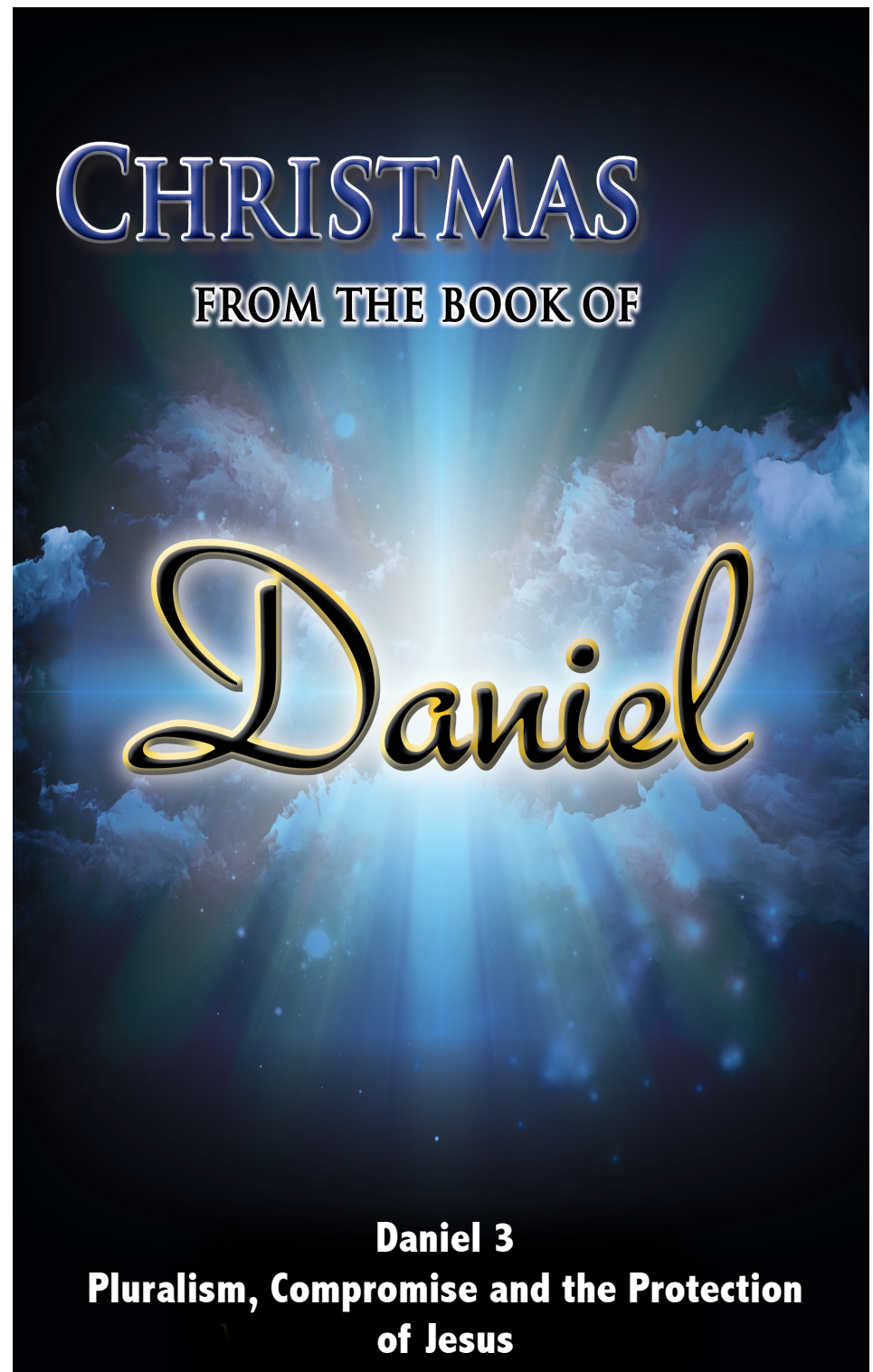
What does this have to do with Christmas?

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." Daniel 3:29 (ESV)

1. We are to work for the good of our city, not isolate ourselves from the city.
2. When we allow the pressure of the culture to force us into privatizing our faith and we no longer believe God's claim to exclusivity, we are culturally assimilated.
3. As Christians in a pluralistic culture we will experience persecution from our peers and the cultural powers. If we don't experience persecution, it is a sign of cultural assimilation.
4. We are to rest in the confidence of God's power to deliver us. He also has the wisdom to know if, when and how to deliver us.
5. It is only those who take the risk of obedience that experience the reward of his favor.
6. Jesus usually doesn't save by protecting us from the furnaces of life, he saves us by protecting us in the furnaces of life.
7. Just as Jesus promised to shield Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar's wrath, he was born to die to shield me from the ultimate furnace of God's wrath against my sin.

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December 23 - Christmas Eve Services - 4:00 pm and 5:30 pm
December 30 - Daniel 3 - Pride



Faith Church - EFCA

December 23, 2012

Daniel 3

Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, 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?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, 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. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Daniel 3:12–18 (ESV)

Where do we cross the line into cultural assimilation?

Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "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? Daniel 3:14 (ESV)

Nebuchadnezzar assimilated people by:

- eliminating religious exclusivity.
- forcing people to privatize their faith.

In a pluralistic culture like Babylon and America, we will experience persecution.

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." Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "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?

We will experience persecution from our peers.

We will experience persecution from those in power.

How do we face cultural persecution?

Know God has the power to deliver us, no matter what the odds.

If this be so, 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. Daniel 3:17 (ESV)

While God has the power to deliver us, he knows best on if, when and how to deliver us.

If this be so, 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. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Daniel 3:17–18 (ESV)