

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE

Daniel Chapter 3



Nebuchadnezzar had a 90 ft statue built based on his dream (Chapter 2).

It arrogantly represented himself as a grandiose expression of his greatness and glory. It was not necessarily made of solid gold, but more likely would have been overlaid with gold, like many objects found in the ruins of Babylon.

The word “image” usually means a human form. Everyone in his kingdom was compelled to worship the image or die. This was in direct conflict with God’s first and second commandments.

Daniel’s three friends were now faced with another faith crisis. Should they quietly go along with everyone else or stand firm in obedience to God?

A. WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Notice how Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men took advantage of the situation to possibly gain back their high positions from under the authority of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by tattle-tailing on them. Watch too how these three young Jews⁶ faced a faith crisis—a turning point or fork in the road that demands a decision. In order to be spared from Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace they placed their full trust in God not knowing what he would do. They chose to obey God no matter what. They were confident that God could save them but notice verse 18, “...but even if he does not...”



⁶ This event most likely took place around the year 585 B.C. when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in their early 30s (Duck and Richards 69).

B. BACKGROUND

The Plain of Duran was a flat and expansive area south of Babylon, suitable for the gathering of an enormous number of people. According to the Septuagint this event took place around 585 B.C. when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in their early thirties. The image was most likely a statue of fewer precious metals covered with gold. Nebuchadnezzar probably wanted one united religion in his kingdom. The repeating of all the satraps, prefects, governors, etc., may have been satirical. The same is true for the repetition of named instruments. Music played an important part of this pagan religious ceremony, just as it often does in leading people away from the living God

Satraps were similar to a prince; prefects were below satraps and were similar to generals or military heads



Furnace: most likely a brick kiln much like a train tunnel closed at one end, and heated with charcoal to about 1,000 degree Celsius (1832 deg. Fahrenheit). The three young Jewish boys did not have to pray or to deliberate what they would do—they had already resolved that they would not disobey God’s first and second commandments.

The fourth being (3:25), “a son of the gods” was either an angel or pre-incarnate Christ is not clear, but many scholars believe it was pre-incarnate Christ.

Notice that Daniel is not cited in this chapter. He may have been on official business somewhere else. At the conclusion, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God but also acknowledging that there were other gods.

C. DANIEL CHAPTER 3 (ESV)

EVERYONE WAS FORCED TO WORSHIP NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S STATUE (3:1-7)

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 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. 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 the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO REFUSE TO WORSHIP THE STATUE (3:8-18)

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹ They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and 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." ¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ 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?" ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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."

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO THROWN INTO THE FURNACE (3:19-23)

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. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

THE APPEARANCE OF A FOURTH BEING (3:24-25)

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."

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO CALLED OUT OF THE FIERY FURNACE (3:26-28)

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."

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HONORS THE GOD OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO (3:29)

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."

NEBUCHADNEZZAR PROMOTES SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO (3:30)

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. "

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY



King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image in the plain of Dura (a word meaning simply "plain") and commanded that all his officials bow down before it. All who failed to do so would be thrown into a blazing furnace. Certain officials informed the king that the three Jewish youths Hanania, Mishael, and Azariah, who bore the Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and whom the king had appointed to high office in Babylon, were refusing to worship the golden statue.

The three were brought before Nebuchadnezzar, where they informed the king that God would be with them. Nebuchadnezzar commanded that they be thrown into the

fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than normal, but when the king looked he saw four figures walking unharmed in the flames, the fourth "like a son of God."

Seeing this, Nebuchadnezzar brought the youths out of the flames and promoted them to high office, decreeing that anyone who spoke against God should be torn limb from limb.

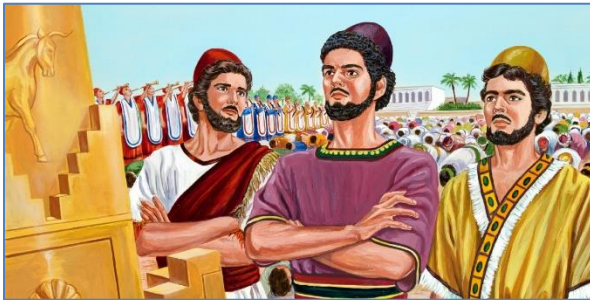
E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the author emphasizing in this chapter?
2. Who told Nebuchadnezzar about these three young men who didn't bow down to the image? (3:8)
3. What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to the three Jews who refused to worship the statue? (3:13)
4. Did these three teenage boys try to negotiate with Nebuchadnezzar or find some sort of compromise? Why, or why not? (3:16-18)
5. What excuses could these three boys have made to avoid punishment?

6. How can we apply 3:16-18 to our lives today?

7. When might Christians today be tempted to compromise their Christian beliefs so that they don't appear as being fanatics or "weirdoes"?

F. CHAPTER WRAP-UP



This chapter makes clear how three Jews remained loyal to God even when their lives were threatened for not worshipping Nebuchadnezzar's statue. They remained obedient to the first two of the Ten Commandments, no matter what happened to them. In

our pluralistic, entertainment-oriented society it is easy to gradually worship other things. Our time, our interests, and our devotion gradually move God and his Word to the background of our lives. God sometimes tests our loyalty to him.

1. **God uses _____ to bring him glory and to refine his people.**

"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?" (Dan. 3:15b)

2. **God deserves our _____.**

"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." (Dan. 3:18).

3. **God's _____ is often most obvious in places of darkness.**

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." (Dan. 3:24-25)