

# ***From Faith To The Furnace....to Faith***

## ***Daniel Chapter 3***

### **OUTLINE:**

- I. The King's Command (Directive) Daniel 3:1-7
  - A. They connect this idea to the image being crafted from gold, linking it to the statue in his dream.
  - B. Given an average person, who is about 18 inches wide, would measure about 15 feet tall with these proportions.
- II. The Accusations Daniel 3:8-12
  - A. While bowing down to an idol is not a big deal for a polytheistic pagan, it is strictly prohibited for God's people, as stated in the 2nd of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4-6).
  - B. Where was Daniel during all of this?
- III. The Trial Daniel 3:13-15
  - A. He gives them a second chance-
  - B. This challenge is the setup that will ultimately bring glory to the true God.
- IV. A Faithful Response Daniel 3:16-18
  - A. The response from these three men serves as a wonderful example for all who follow the true God.
- V. The Judgment Daniel 3:19-23
  - A. Their calm but defiant response causes Nebuchadnezzar to completely lose his temper.
- VI. The Deliverance Daniel 3:24-27
  - A. The king now recognized there was a God that could rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from his hands.
- VII. The Decree Daniel 3:28-30
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that they were right to defy his command to serve and worship only their God.
  - B. Speculation about the precise identity of this angel is unnecessary because his significance lies in his clear role as a protector sent by God for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

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### **Introduction**

This morning, we're diving into one of my favorite Bible stories! I often heard Daniel 3 called the tale of three young friends from Israel in the fiery furnace. As a child, I imagined Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as boys like me. However, I later realized these men were captured when they were young, viewing them as brave young men around my age. Their courage to defy the king's orders inspired me to uphold the truth, despite the consequences. As we mature and explore Daniel more, I appreciate the faithfulness and integrity of these men, and what this story reveals about God's character—how it led King Nebuchadnezzar and his officials to recognize Him as the Most High God!

### **I. The King's Command or Directive – Read **Daniel 3:1-7****

The chapter begins with King Nebuchadnezzar erecting a statue and then commanding everyone to bow down to it.

- A. People often wonder about the timing of this event and the image it depicts. Some believe that it takes place shortly after Nebuchadnezzar had his dream, as mentioned in Daniel 2. **They connect this idea to the image being crafted from gold, linking it to the statue in his dream,** which also had a golden head. However, it's important to remember that this is merely an assumption.

- 1. The description of the image feels a bit unclear, only touching on its size and the material used. It doesn't really specify what the image looked like. If it were a human figure, the proportions seem quite unusual, being around 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide! Just to give you an idea, an average person, who is about 18 inches wide, would measure about 15 feet tall in this case. Maybe the image

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was intended to portray an idealized person or something entirely different!

2. The image was crafted from gold, and it seems quite possible that Babylon had enough gold to create it as a solid piece. However, when we think about the engineering aspects, it's more likely that it was made from a sturdier material like stone or wood, then beautifully overlaid with gold. This method was quite popular for making "golden" objects, as pure gold is relatively soft. Plus, picturing the entire image as made of solid gold doesn't quite fit with the dream where the statue included parts made from silver, bronze, iron, and a mix of iron with clay.
  - a. The image made of gold may or may not have had a connection to his dream. It could have been that the entire image was gold as a display of his pride and defiance against Daniel's interpretation that other kingdoms would follow Babylon.
  - b. But it may also have been made of gold, given that Babylon was filled with gold, with their chief god, Marduk, being the "god of gold."
    - i. The image may have had more religious significance than some commentators are willing to admit.
3. The reality is that the description of this image and the timing of its setup are vague in the text because they are not crucial to the reason for recounting this historical event to later generations.

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- a. The purpose is not to provide insight into Babylonian history and practices; rather, it is to demonstrate the power of the true God and the faithfulness of His followers.
- B. There's a fascinating bit of speculation surrounding the location of the plains of Dura! The term "Dura" actually refers to any place that's enclosed by a wall, which adds an interesting layer to our understanding. Most likely, this location was about 6 miles southeast of Babylon, where archaeologists have uncovered a mound made of bricks. This structure would have been an ideal foundation for what we're envisioning. Plus, being in a valley plain would have made the height of the statues truly remarkable!
- C. Once the image was set up, King Nebuchadnezzar asked all the key government officials to come together for its dedication. Although there's a bit of uncertainty about the exact titles mentioned, they include a variety of roles, from satraps and local magistrates to regional governors and local judges.
  1. The phrases "all the peoples, nations and language" indicate that they came from throughout the Babylonian kingdom. The gathering of these officials demonstrates the significance that Nebuchadnezzar placed on this ceremony.
  2. Once everyone is gathered around the shimmering golden image, a command is given for them to bow down and worship when the enchanting music of what sounds like a Babylonian orchestra fills the air.

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- a. We are not sure what some of the instruments listed are, but they include wind, reed and string instruments. You can be sure that when they began to play all the people would be aware.
- 3. The purpose is unclear. There is a religious aspect, as the command involves “worship” of the image. However, with government officials present, it serves as a political exercise in demonstrating loyalty to the king.
  - a. In a pagan polytheistic society, such worship posed no issue since it simply added another god to their pantheon. People could continue to worship their chosen gods; they just needed to include the king’s deities. This form of worship was often connected to political loyalty, as they believed their gods had established their power, making the veneration of those gods a sign of allegiance to the government.
- D. The opposite would also be true. Refusing to worship the god or gods of those in power would be an act of hostility toward the king and his kingdom. The strong warning in verse 6 that those who would not fall down and worship the image would be cast into a furnace and burned alive indicates that the king suspected disloyalty among them. The furnace mentioned would be similar to a lime kiln with a vertical shaft that allowed materials to be poured in from the top and extracted from the side.

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1. was no idle threat, as Jeremiah 29:22 mentions that the king of Babylon roasted Zedekiah and Ahab in the fire to execute them.

### **(` I. The King's Command)**

### **II. The Accusations – Daniel 3:8-12**

While bowing down to an idol is not a big deal for a polytheistic pagan, it is strictly prohibited for God's people, as stated in the 2nd of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4-6). As previously mentioned in chapter 1, there were a few Jews who had been captured, trained, and integrated into the Babylonian government, yet they remained loyal to God. Their integrity demanded that they refuse the king's command. They were observed, and thus the expected accusations were brought against them.

(READ Daniel 3:8-12)

A. You would think that Nebuchadnezzar would have some people designated to watch for those who would not bow, but here we find it is not a law enforcement officer of some type, but the Chaldeans who make the accusations.

1. You might recall that the Chaldeans were one of the groups of wise men who likely felt jealousy when the king discovered that Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were ten times wiser than all the magicians and conjurers of his realm, resulting in their appointment to his personal service (Daniel 1:19-20).
2. That jealousy would have only intensified after Daniel revealed and interpreted the king's dream when they could not, leading to

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Daniel being appointed governor over the province of Babylon and made prefect over all the wise men, with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah overseeing the administration of the province of Babylon (Daniel 2:48-49).

- a. Before I go on, I need to comment on what is missing in this accusation. Daniel is not mentioned. There has been much speculation made about why, but the text does not give any indication.

B. **Where was Daniel during all of this?** Interestingly, Daniel is not mentioned in the story at all. Why did Daniel's three friends face the wrath of the king alone? Where was Daniel during their time of crisis?

1. **Scripture does not say** where Daniel was when King Nebuchadnezzar tried to kill Daniel's friends. There are a few possibilities, **all of them speculative**:
  - a. 1) Daniel, who was "ruler over the entire province of Babylon and . . . in charge of all its wise men" ([Daniel 2:48](#)), had been sent away on an assignment by Nebuchadnezzar and was therefore not present at the event described in [Daniel 3](#).
  - 2) Because of Daniel's promotion and his place in the royal court ([Daniel 2:49](#)), Nebuchadnezzar had exempted Daniel from the command to bow down to the golden statue.
  - 3) Daniel, in fear of being executed or to appease the king, bowed down to the golden statue.

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2. Option (3) can definitely be dismissed. One thing we say for sure is that Daniel was *not* bowing down to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had made. He who had “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” ([Daniel 1:8, KJV](#)) was not going to commit a blatant act of wickedness such as worshipping a false god. In [Daniel 6](#), Daniel risks his life by simply praying. If Daniel was willing to die for his commitment to prayer, there is no way he would have directly violated one of the Ten Commandments (see [Exodus 20:4](#)). Daniel’s character and commitment were such that he would not dare dishonor the Lord.
3. Options (1) and (2) are both plausible, with (1) perhaps being the more likely possibility. Nebuchadnezzar’s command to bow down and worship the image was addressed to “nations and peoples of every language” ([Daniel 3:4](#)), and present at the dedication were “the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials” (verse 3). In other words, the king’s command seems universal, with no exceptions; everyone within hearing range of the music was to bow down and worship the king’s image (verse 5).
4. The most likely scenario was simply due to the fact that Daniel may not have been present at the event because of the duties of his office.
5. Remember, this took place in the plains of Dura at a place thought to have been in the area of the city of Erech, some 95 miles southeast of Babylon. Since Daniel was the ruler over the



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province of Babylon proper, it is more likely that he was tending to the affairs of his office and was not at the event.

C. Their accusations are in keeping with the manner in which evil people have always treated those who follow the Lord. That is why Jesus warned us to be prepared for the same against us in [Matthew 5:10-12](#),

1. *“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*<sup>11</sup> *“Blessed are you when [men] cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.”*<sup>12</sup> *“Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

D. The Chaldeans went to the king and reminded him of the command he had given and the penalty for not bowing down to worship the golden image. They then pointed out that certain Jews – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – whom the king himself had appointed over the province of Babylon did not obey the command. They make three accusations.

1. First, they had *“disregarded the king.”* This accusation was designed to make their refusal to bow a personal affront to the king.
2. Second, they *“do not serve your gods.”* They are an affront to Nebuchadnezzar’s gods. The king had acknowledged the God of Daniel as being a great God able to do what his gods were not, but he had not abandoned his gods. He also would not have known these three men well enough to know their commitment to whatever God they served, even if he did know it was the same

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God as that of Daniel. The king would still have been relying on his gods to keep him in power and keep his kingdom successful, so he would not want to risk offending his gods.

3. Third, they do not *“worship the golden image which you have set up.”* This ties the first two accusations together for it is their disobedience to the king’s command upon which the other two accusations are made. They disregard the king and his gods.

E. The Chaldeans were successful in getting the king to take action. In fact, they were perhaps too successful for the king lost his temper and wisdom with it.

1. [Proverbs 12:6](#) states, *A fool’s vexation is known at once, But a prudent man conceals dishonor.*
2. [Proverbs 29:11](#) adds, *“A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.”* Yet God will use even Nebuchadnezzar losing his temper to fulfill His own purposes.

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### **III. The Trial – Daniel 3:13-15**

In a moment of anger, he brings the three men before him. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar holds these men in high regard and might have seen the jealousy that pushed the Chaldeans to accuse them. Instead of rushing to throw them into the fire, he takes a deep breath to gather his thoughts, allowing himself to question them. **He gives them a second chance-** He personally repeats his command, offering them another chance to follow his wishes while also delivering a serious warning.

A. Nebuchadnezzar then adds, *“and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”* There are two possible reasons or a combination of them that would cause him to make this statement.

1. First, the king could be so proud and arrogant he claims that even the gods could not deliver them.
2. Second, the worship of the golden image could include the worship of a god that he believes is superior that would prevent any god they served from rescuing them.

B. Either way, **this challenge is the setup that will ultimately bring glory to the true God.**

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### **IV. A Faithful Response – [Daniel 3:16-18](#)**

**The response from these three men serves as a wonderful example for all who follow the true God** on how to react when faced with challenges about prioritizing their obedience to Him above all else. (READ 3:16-18)

- A. They were not rude to the king, but they were direct. In view of the king's statement, they saw no need to give an explanation for why they would not bow and worship the golden image.
  - a. They simply state their faith in their own God and His abilities while also yielding themselves to His will, regardless of what he chooses to do. Contrary to the king's claim of absolute power to condemn them, they knew their lives were in the hands of their God, and they were at peace even if obedience to God cost them their lives. There are many times when obedience to God will mean persecution even to the point of martyrdom. Church history is filled with such stories and it continues to this day and especially in areas controlled by Communists, strict Muslims or fanatic Hindus.

Life is different for professing Christians that have that kind of trust in God's abilities and yield themselves in that way to the Lord's will, for such trust and submission results in a holy life that has a peace that surpasses all comprehension. It has a confidence when facing the future even when it looks bleak. I think that most of us would like to believe we would respond the way they did if we were in their situation, but whether you would or not depends on what you actually believe about God. The reality is that we do face all sorts of similar though less dramatic situations in daily life that challenge our trust

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and submission to God. How you respond to those are the indicators of what you would do if facing a serious or even life threatening situation. What would you do in these situations?

Peer Pressure: 1) Your friends want to go to a movie that the reviews report glorifies immorality and blasphemes God. 2) Your friends are drinking and getting intoxicated. 3) Your enjoying an activity with your friends, but now they are breaking the posted rules and they want you to join them. 4) Your friends are advocating ideas and actions that you know are contrary to God's word.

School Pressure: 1) Your teacher is an evolutionist and grades down those who disagree with him and you have to write a paper on the origin of life. 2) In a class discussion the claim is made that either God is impotent or does not exist because there is evil in the world.

Work Pressure: 1) Your boss gives you new sales literature that lies about the product you are selling. 2) Your boss wants you to sign off on a padded expense list. 3) You were hired with the understanding that you would not work Sundays, but a new boss just changed your hours to include Sunday morning. 4) New work rules demand that you use a person's preferred pronouns which are contrary to what they are in reality.

Government Pressure: 1) You are a photographer and you declined to work a homosexual wedding and now a law suit is threatening your business license. 2) You are a nursing student and a new State law requires you to participate in abortion training. 3) You are on a public sidewalk passing out gospel literature and a police officer arrests you for it. 4) You are being mandated to take an experimental medical treatment contrary to what you believe is the right thing to do before God.

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All of these are real situations that have happened and there are thousands more like them. You will be put to the test of whether you will obey God first and foremost or yield to the pressure to conform to some other standard. Your ability to stand firm will be based on your level of trust and submission to God, and God always trains you in relatively easy situations before you face the extremely difficult ones. Remember that [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) assures us that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. He always provides a way of escape so that you can endure it.

#### **V. The Judgment – Daniel 3:19-23**

**Their calm but defiant response causes Nebuchadnezzar to completely lose his temper. (READ Daniel 3:19-23)**

- A. If the king wanted to cause them to suffer, he would have cooled the fire so they would live longer in its agony. In his anger he commanded the opposite and heated it up seven times hotter which would kill them faster, but all that managed to do was cause the death of the mighty men charged with casting them in. The deaths of these valiant men proved the lethality of the fire.
- B. In addition, usually, victims of this type of execution would be stripped first, but there was such haste that they were tied up in their clothes with even their caps on. This fact would become another proof in the miracle God was about to perform.

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#### **VI. The Deliverance – (READ Daniel 3:24-27)**

The furnace was arranged so that the king could see inside, and what he saw astounded him. Remember that they were cast in- **tied up**. They would not have been able to run away, and once cast in, they should not have even been able to stand up.

A. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar sees them walking around in the midst of the fire unharmed, and then he notices there are four figures, not three, walking around.

1. The fourth figure was different, having the appearance of a divine being, which he calls “a son of the gods.”
2. His religious belief was that the gods had sons who appeared as divine men.

#### **READ Daniel 3:26-27**

B. Contrary to his earlier statement, the king now recognized there was a God that could rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from his hands. The king now acknowledges that they are “*servants of the Most High God*.” There can be little doubt that he understood this to be the same God that Daniel served though the title is now supreme. To a polytheist, a “God of gods” is a great God, but the “Most High God” is the supreme God.

C. The evidence of the miraculous deliverance is confirmed by three groups of the top officials in the kingdom – satraps, prefects and governors. Shadrach, Meshach and Abenego emerge from the furnace unharmed.

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1. The fire had completely burned away the ropes that had bound them, but did not even as much as singe their hair, damage their clothes or even leave the smell of smoke on them. Each of these facts only magnified the level of the miracle. The king responded with a new decree.

**VII. The Decree – Daniel 3:28-30, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that they were right to defy his command to serve and worship only their God.** He understood that this was a challenge between his gods and their God, and his gods lost. He recognized the fourth man in the fire as an angel or messenger from their God who protected them.

**Speculation about the precise identity of this angel is unnecessary because his significance lies in his clear role as a protector sent by God for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.**

- A. Since their God proved Himself as the Most High God by protecting them, the king does not want to risk offending Him, so he issues a new decree. No one from any people, nation, or tongue is to speak anything offensive against this Most High God, or they will face execution in a horrific manner—being torn apart and having their memory dishonored as their houses become public latrines. The king then caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to prosper in the province of Babylon. We can be sure this was to the chagrin and shame of the Chaldeans who had sought their downfall.



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### **Conclusions**

- A. God has proven Himself to be not only the Most High God by the way He rescued His three servants, but also patient in His dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. God could have simply destroyed him for his idolatry and arrogant boasting. Instead, the Lord leads him to a deeper understanding of the truth.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar is forced to acknowledge that the Lord is the Most High God, but at this point he is not ready to renounce and abandon his false gods. Nebuchadnezzar also still has a serious pride issue that God will deal as we shall see in chapter 4.
- C. Sadly, many resemble Nebuchadnezzar. Despite God's patience and efforts to encourage acknowledgment, they resist yielding to Him. They may include God in their beliefs while clinging to old ones. This syncretism is evil, causing the downfall of Israel and Judah, leading to captivity. Don't be like that. The Lord is God, and there is no other.
- D. We should strive to be like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), who serve as excellent examples of trusting God and submitting their lives to Him. Each of us needs to follow their example in obeying God and trusting Him for the outcomes of the various situations we encounter in life. Learning to trust and obey God during the relatively minor tests of faith strengthens us to face the greater challenges that will come in a world filled with sin.

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### **Good Quotes to use:**

- “The difference between a true believer and an unbeliever isn’t faith's presence; everyone has faith in something. The key difference lies in the object of that faith.”
- “Faith is one of the forces by which men live.”<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah 43:1-2 (NIV) <sup>1</sup>But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

- “Faith means obeying God regardless of the feelings within us, the circumstances around us, or the consequences before us.”<sup>2</sup>
- “True faith obeys the Lord and trusts Him to work out the consequences.”
- “The tense of the Greek verb in Matthew 49 indicates that Satan asked Jesus to worship him only one time, and the Savior refused. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the golden image even once because it would lead to serving Nebuchadnezzar's false gods for the rest of their lives.”

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<sup>1</sup> William James, Philosopher and Psychologist

<sup>2</sup> The Bible Exposition Commentary: Prophets. Wiersbe, Warren W. 2002, pg. 264