

03. The Book of Daniel—3:1-30

(4/5/17)

It's been two weeks since we've been in the book of Daniel—and at that time we finished chapter two.

Chapter two revolves around a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had—a dream that none of his wise men or astrologers could interpret for the king (who also wanted them to tell him what the dream itself was first!).

The king got so furious with their inability to satisfy his request—that he quickly ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be killed.

Daniel and his friends prayed and God revealed to Daniel not only what the dream was and its interpretation—but even what the king was thinking about as he was laying on his bed before he fell asleep! (Explain)

Daniel 2:31-38 (NKJV)

³¹ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. ³² This image's head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ "This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all--you are this head of gold...

And Daniel goes on to tell the king that, including his kingdom, there would be five world governing empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the world empire controlled by the Antichrist).

While that final empire was in power, it would be replaced by a Kingdom that would never end—a Kingdom ruled by Messiah... (Dan. 2:46-49)

Now, let me give you the historical context of chapter three which will help you to understand King Nebuchadnezzar's mindset.

Chapter three takes place sixteen years after chapter two—the year is 586 B.C.

That was the year that King Neb attacked Jerusalem for the third and final time.

During this third siege, he destroyed the city and the Temple.

You have to understand the thinking of these ancient, pagan kings.

They believed if they conquered a city, sacked and destroyed the temples of their gods—it proved that your gods were more powerful than their gods or else you would never have been able to conquer that city or those people.

You see, even though in chapter two the God of Israel revealed to Daniel Neb's dream and its interpretation—in his mind he's now thinking, *"I've just destroyed the temple of the God of the Jews, my gods are stronger than Him, I'm in control, He now 'works for me'."*

That, then becomes the backdrop of chapter three—a chapter that deals with the deification and self-worship of man—which will reach its climax under the Antichrist!

Chapter 3

Daniel 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

The word ‘**Dura**’ simply means “*a walled-in place*”—there were several sites with that name in ancient Babylon, one about six miles from the capital city.

As we just said, the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represented the Babylonian Empire—which eventually would be replaced by the next world empire, Medo-Persia.

But here, Neb, makes a statue ninety-feet high by nine feet wide made *entirely* of gold—it was his way of defying the God of Israel by saying, “*My kingdom of Babylon will live forever and never be replaced!*”

Just a side note—there wasn’t enough gold in his entire kingdom to make an image of solid gold ninety-feet tall, so the image was probably made of wood overlaid with gold (Isa. 40:19; 41:7; Jer. 10:3–9).

Symbolically, this image represents mankind in general.

Six in the Bible is the number of man (man was made on the sixth day of creation)—the statue is sixty cubits tall (ten times six), and six cubits wide.

Dr. David Jeremiah,

“In Revelation 13:18, the number of the beast of the Antichrist was the number of man, 666. The Bible gives the number six to mankind; seven is the number for perfection. We fall short; we never come up to the standard.”

The image is a good picture of mankind; it was made of wood overlaid with gold. That's the way our projects are: outwardly imperishable, but inwardly inferior. Man is always setting up his gigantic projects, but when you get down to the core of them, there's not much there."

Daniel 3:2 (NKJV)

² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Satrap is a Persian word that means *protector of the realm*—it refers to a specific category of public officials.

Daniel 3:3-7 (NKJV)

³ So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." ⁷ So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Both the **lyre** and **psaltery** were small hand-held harp instruments—one for higher and the other for lower sounds.

It's interesting that Neb couples music with his idolatry—which shouldn't surprise us.

Music has always been a powerful tool which the devil (the god of this world) still uses to get people to bow down and worship idols (King Neb is acting in the capacity of the god of that world).

Originally, it was God Who created music for worship in heaven and Lucifer was a musician and appointed as the worship leader of heaven by the Lord (Ezek. 28:13-14).

After Lucifer rebelled against God and fell, he continued to use music to control fallen sinners and lead them into false worship and rebellion against God.

Ravi Zacharias—

“There is something very powerful that takes place when someone else’s philosophies and values and ideologies are put to music—the music...causes it to by-pass reason and go straight to the imagination. And now through M.T.V. and music videos you have the most powerful tool of all for indoctrination, bringing this generation to the same place before God destroyed mankind with a flood because the ‘thoughts of the imagination of his heart was only evil continually.’”

Daniel 3:8-12 (NKJV)

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

The question is—where is Daniel?

There are two possibilities—1) As Prime Minister, he was away on a mission for the king; 2) He is there but is bowing to Neb’s image.

I think everyone in this room would vote for number one.

Daniel 3:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?* ¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and psaltery*, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

As we have said in the past—all kings and kingdoms are placed in power by God—something that Nebuchadnezzar himself eventually came to acknowledge at the end of chapter four!

The New Testament affirms this as well—

Romans 13:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Paul is telling us that anyone who disobeys or rebels against the government is disobeying and rebelling against what God has ordained—and will bring God’s judgment upon them.

1 Peter 2:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.

The only time God allows us to disobey civil government is when the government passes laws that are in direct violation of God’s laws— then, as Peter said, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” (Acts 5:29)

So here, Nebuchadnezzar (the state) passed a law that he commands Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to obey—to commit idolatry by worshipping his golden image.

But of course, to do so would have violated God's command that His people not bow down and worship any god but Him—

Exodus 20:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God...

So this a case of righteous rebellion against the state—as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego put God's law above man's law.

Daniel 3:15-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"** ¹⁶ **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter [i.e. 'there's no point in talking about it, we've weighed the consequences, we've counted the cost—the matter is settled. We will not bow to your image.']. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."**

I love how balanced these three young men were in their theology—“*Our God is able to deliver us from your fiery furnace O king, and we believe He will deliver us—but even if He doesn't we won't bow to your image.*”

These men didn't say that their faith would deliver them—they said our God *can* and *might* deliver us but it might be His will to let us die to accomplish His purposes—either way our commitment and obedience to Him is non-negotiable in this matter!

Our faith and Gods' sovereignty are not mutually exclusive.

We can believe in God's power while still bowing to His sovereignty in a given situation without violating or losing our faith—even as Job said, *“Even though He kills me, yet I will still trust Him.”* (Comment)

True faith doesn't dictate or command God to do what we want—it submits to Him and trusts His will in a given situation regardless of the outcome.

One author said this—

“The statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is remarkable for what it does not have—any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this it is easy to think of a thousand excuses that seem to justify compromise.

1. *They might have said, “There is nothing to gain by resisting; wouldn't we do more good by living?”*
2. *They might have said, “We are in a different place; in Rome, do as the Romans do.”*
3. *They might have said, “We will lose our jobs and our standard of living.”*
4. *They might have said, “After all, we are not being called to renounce our God” or “We are not bowing down to the idol in our hearts—only outwardly in respect for the king...”*
5. *They might have said, “Everybody else is doing it.”*
6. *They might have said, “This is more than can be expected of us; God will understand just this once.”*

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Spurgeon described the horror of those who lose their courage at such times:

“Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed: he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the cross, and this man was afraid to own him. To win the smile of a silly maid, to escape the jest of a coarse fellow, to win a few pieces of silver, to stand respectable among his fellow-men, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord; and now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of glory. He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in hell get away from him, for many of them were more honest than he. Is there such a man as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let him come forth and own his crime, and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior.”

Daniel 3:19-23 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

One author described this furnace—

“The furnace was used for smelting ore. It had a large opening at the top through which fuel and vessels full of ore could be placed into the fire, and there was a door at the bottom through which the metal was taken out. An opening in a wall enabled the smelters to check on the progress of their work, and through holes in the wall they could use bellows to make the fire blaze even more. The unit was large enough for at least four persons to walk around in it. It was into this furnace that Nebuchadnezzar cast the three faithful Jews, fully clothed and bound. It seemed like certain death for the men who refused to obey the king.”

Daniel 3:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men

loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The Hebrew can be translated (and I believe this is what King Neb actually said), **"I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods."**

Of course, we believe this was none other than the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ in an O.T. preincarnate appearance known as a Theophany or Christophany. (Explain)

Isaiah 43:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ ... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; You *are* Mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

Daniel 3:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

The fire did not harm them, the smoke did not cling to them—the only thing that was destroyed were the ropes that bound them.

The same thing happens to us when we are subjected to the fires of adversity—they grow us, they strengthen our faith and set us free from fleshly bondages.

And this is why the N.T. writers encouraged us to embrace trials and not try to escape them—

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

As someone has said, *“When God puts one of His children in the furnace—He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.”*

Warren Wiersbe—

“The devil tempts us to destroy our faith, but God tests us to develop our faith, because a faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted. False faith withers in times of trial, but true faith takes deeper root, grows, and brings glory to God. This explains why God permitted the three Hebrew men to be tested and then thrown into the fiery furnace. The Apostle Peter must have been well acquainted with the Book of Daniel because he used the metaphor of the “fiery trial” when he warned his readers of the persecutions about to come to the church (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12).”

Daniel 3:28-30 (NKJV)

²⁸ **Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.**

It’s interesting that chapter two ended with Nebuchadnezzar himself praising the God of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego for revealing his dream and giving the interpretation of it—

“Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.” (Dan.2:47)

But now sixteen years later, in chapter three, we see that he has fallen back into his idolatrous ways.

Over the years there have been a number of well-known actors, rock stars and professional athletes that lived notoriously sinful lives—and then supposedly got saved.

Because of their fame, the Christian community rushed to have them share their testimonies at their church services and at Christian conferences.

The problem was, after a while, many of them fell back into their sinful ways and renounced their so-called faith (Bob Dylan and others).

Jesus warned us in the Parable of the Sower that many of those who profess faith in Him, and look good for a while—eventually go back to the world and their old life.

Genuine believers will continue in the faith (John 8:31-32); and will bear fruit and their fruit will remain (John 15:16).

Fortunately for King Neb, God didn't give up on him and I believe he eventually did get saved (as we will see in chapter four).

One last thing and we'll close.

In this chapter, we have a glimpse of the Tribulation Period in view—a time that Jeremiah designates as *“the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble”*.

Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the Antichrist who, during the Tribulation Period, will demand that everyone in the world bow down and worship his image or be killed—

Revelation 13:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego—they represent Israel (primarily, the 144,000 Jews) that refuse to bow to the Antichrist's image, stand up for the True and Living God and preach the gospel during the Tribulation Period.

This will truly be a 'fiery furnace' of tribulation and testing for the people of God—and yet we read in the Book of Revelation that God will supernaturally protect them and bring them thru this period (Rev.12:13-17).

The fact that **Daniel** was gone during this whole incident in chapter three is no coincidence—for you see Daniel represents **the Church**.

And we know the Church will be gone (raptured) before the Tribulation Period begins.

Revelation 4:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne.

That sounds like Rapture language—

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:52 (NKJV)

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The church has been mentioned 19 times in the first 3 chapters of the Book of Revelation—but then disappears from the earth (before the Tribulation Period begins in chapter 6).

J. Vernon McGee—

“From here on (starting in Revelation 4) you will not find the word *church* mentioned...But now the church goes off the air—there is no mention of it. It has gone off the air because it went up in the air; it was caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the air. The church has gone to heaven—that is what has happened to it...”

The Church is not seen again in the book until we see her as the Bride of Christ in chap.19 returning with the Lord to the earth to establish His Kingdom.