

Daniel 3a – The Chapter

An Image of Defiance and a Fiery Trial

Daniel 3:1 *“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.”*

King made an image of gold - The impression of the dream in chapter 2 had obviously worn off by this time, the impression being in verses 46-49. For Nebuchadnezzar made the entire image of gold unlike the one in his dream. He was not content with having another kingdom succeed his own so, more in defiance, he makes one of gold. This was to show that his kingdom was not going to be succeeded by another but continue on perpetually. It was more an image of defiance and rebellion against God. He was worshiping his own kingdom and the exaltation of himself at the head of it.

We see part truths in this image of defiance. For Babylon, then ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, was depicted as being the head of gold in the dream. Then there was to be the chest and arms of silver, but not so with Nebuchadnezzar. Satan loves to mingle just enough truth with error to make things appear as being correct, but it is for the purpose of bringing about your fall. We see this example in Genesis 3.

Height was threescore cubits...breadth thereof six cubits - Sixty cubits high by six cubits wide, which would include the height of a pedestal as the image would be out of proportion if there were not one. In our language, it was 27.43 metres by 2.74 metres.

Set up...plain of Dura...Province of Babylon - The image was set up on the plain of Dura, which is approximately 41 kilometres south east of Babylon. Dura was a province/district of Babylon.

Daniel 3:2-3 *“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”*

Nebuchadnezzar was to make the dedication a rather big occasion. He gathered together all the chief men of his kingdom from all the provinces to come to the dedication. The response was one of full acceptance by all. This is quite remarkable seeing that some would have to travel a great distance to be there. Idolaters are generally very committed to their religion. What about us?

Daniel 3:4-7 *“Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut,*

psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”

All kinds of music, ye fall down and worship - The congregation were informed that when they hear all kinds of music they were to bow down to the image and worship it. Music has a great influence over a person's mind and can create a pleasant atmosphere to help a person feel at peace in a given situation, or to encourage/persuade a person. Music can be used rightly or wrongly. We need to be careful in the type of music we listen to because of the influence it can have over a person, even more so in worshiping God. Satan himself is the master of music, as he was created with musical instruments in him (Ezekiel 28:13) thus he uses it to his advantage.

Burning fiery furnace - If the music was no help in preparing the people to worship the image, Nebuchadnezzar had furnaces in place to give a little more encouragement. Nebuchadnezzar was dictating to the people the way they were going to worship, what they were going to worship, and how they were going to worship. If they did not, it was punished by death. Forced worship is the system of the false religion, as Babylon was at the head of a false system of religion. Whereas with God it is a system of choice. (Revelation 2:17, Isaiah 1:18, Joshua 24:15). At the end of time we find that we have the same situation: forced worship under the penalty of death if not complied with. (Revelation 13:15)

Therefore at that time - Because of the death penalty to all who did not comply, when the people heard the music they all bowed down and worshiped the image.

Daniel 3:8-12 *“Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping, that he should 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 Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: they serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”*

Wherefore at that time - At the time that all had bowed down and worshiped the image.

Chaldeans came near...accused the Jews - These Chaldeans were obviously revengeful for being exposed as liars in the previous chapter. They came to the king accusing the Jews.

Hast made a decree...— They remind the king that he has made a decree to throw any, who would not bow down at the sound of the music, into the fiery furnace.

Certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs - These were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Being sly, the Chaldeans remind the king that it was he who appointed them to that position.

Not regard thee...serve not thy gods... - After reminding the king that it was his idea to place them at such a high position, they tell him that these three Jews have no regard for his authority nor serve his gods, they didn't even bow down and worship the image. The structure of the Chaldeans sentence, is one of bringing his mind to remembrance of the death penalty, who **he** had promoted to a high position in the kingdom, then belittling the king by showing how the ones promoted have no regard for his authority. This would outrage the king.

Why were they there anyway? The king required them to be there; this much they could comply with without compromising.

Daniel 3:13-18 *“Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if you worship not, you 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? 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”*

Rage and fury commanded to bring... - The king was in a rage, or Heb. violent anger, and furious. He commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There they stood in front of the king.

Serve my gods - The king asks them if the accusation is true about not serving his gods or worshipping the image. They had already set their hearts on serving the true God of heaven, who they knew was to have no other gods before Him, or to bow down before any graven image. (Exodus 20:3-5) For in reality they would be worshipping devils. (Deuteronomy 32:15-17) This they would not do.

If ye be ready...worship not - Nebuchadnezzar, trying to save face, remarkably gives them another chance to submit to his authority. He also reminds them that if they do not comply with his demands they would be thrown into the burning fiery furnace, showing that it is not a matter of conscience but a dictation on who you will worship. This was done by force, namingly the death penalty.

Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? -How defiant and arrogant is the question posed by Nebuchadnezzar? He basically states that he knows of no god that can

deliver them from the sure death of the furnace. In saying this he openly admits that not even his gods could deliver them, and that there is not a god alive that can.

We are not careful to answer - Their reply to the king was straight to the point, and not one of trying to get on the king's good side through an eloquent style of speech. They gave the king an answer of, not to bother about a second chance as we have already made up our minds.

If it be so... - Or, if this is your decision to throw us into the fiery furnace. If this was the king's decision, these three young men had full faith in the ability of God to be able to deliver them from the flames and out of the king's hand. They tell the king that there is a living God, Whom we serve, that can deliver us.

But if not... - Even if the Lord was not to deliver them, they were content to have their lives cease obeying God than live and obey man. Perfect peace and everlasting strength, even in the face of death, was within their minds because they had perfect trust in the Lord and set their faces like flint to obey God rather than man. (Isaiah 26:3-4; 50:7, Acts 5:29)

They told the king they would rather die than dishonour their God. So they rejected the religion of the world power and of the state. What incredible faith and strength. We too will be called upon to exercise the same faith and strength in the last days. (Revelation 20:4)

Daniel 3:19-23 *“Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in 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 coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”*

Nebuchadnezzar full of fury - When the king heard this reply he went into a rage of anger, so much so that his whole visage/countenance was changed. Here was a man at the head of the world, full of power, yet unable to control the will of these young men. This was too much for him to take, for this was straight out wilful disobedience to his will.

Seven times hotter - Set on their utter destruction and full of fury, the king orders the furnace to be heated seven times hotter, or in other words to its maximum temperature. The fuel used was crude oil and chaff.

Most mighty men - The king ordered that the mightiest men of his army were to bind them and cast them into the furnace raging with heat. So the mighty men bound them and cast them into the fiery furnace clothes and all.

Because the king's commandment was urgent - All the king was worried about was the destruction of those who were rebelling against him. But because his commandment was so urgent and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames slew the mightiest men as they threw them in.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell down bound into the fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:24-25 *“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”*

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished - After they had been thrown in, something caught the king's eye that amazed him and he quickly stood up. Speaking to his counsellors he asks them what appears to be a rather strange question: did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Of course the answer comes back as true for all had seen the three of them cast into the fire.

I see four men loose - Nebuchadnezzar had a good reason for asking the question he had. For the reason why he was astonished was that he saw four people walking around in the midst of the fire and not three. None of them had any hurt.

Fourth is like the Son of God - The Lord did not forget His own. As His witnesses were cast into the furnace, the Saviour revealed Himself to them in person, and together they walked in the midst of the fire. In the presence of the Lord of heat and cold, the flames lost their power to consume.

How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.

Daniel 3:26-27 *“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.”*

Come forth, and come hither - Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the furnace and calls for them to come out. He calls them the servants of the most high God, as he has seen their God is an all powerful God to be able to save them from the fire, and they were willing to serve Him even in the face of death.

Why did they not come out when the fire burnt the ropes that bound them? Well the Psalmist said “*in thy presence is the fullness of joy*” Psalms 16:11, so why would they wish to come out and leave the presence of God, in which is the fullness of joy? Plus they had not been asked to come out prior to this.

Came forth of the midst of the fire - They came out with all the princes, governors, captains, and the king’s counsellors looking on. Each of them were untouched by the fire, even to the point that not a thing even smelt of the fire. The mightiest men were slain by the fire, yet the three were not. The furnace was heated seven times hotter but it only served to show a greater extent of the power of God to deliver. The impression upon the minds of the onlookers must have been remarkable.

Daniel 3:28-30 “*Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.*”

Nebuchadnezzar realizes that there is a God that is ultimately in control, and can change the words of even the king to allow His servants to worship Him and not worship any other god. The king therefore reinstates them into their positions in the kingdom of Babylon. The whole affair was to be taken back to the entire kingdom through the leaders that came from afar, as the king had bid them to come. But the king himself makes a decree to have not a person say anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. From this we can see that the king’s attitude to worship is still the same, forced. To decree is to force. Friends, we need to stand true to God even in the face of death, and obey God rather than man. If we do, God will honour us as He did the three worthies, and confess our names before the Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:32) There is a reward that awaits those who stand for the truth.

SN HASKELL: THE STORY OF DANIEL THE PROPHET

What the Jewish nation as a nation had failed to do in proclaiming the truth to the nations of the world, God accomplished under the most trying circumstances, with only three men. The story of the miraculous deliverance was told to the ends of the earth. The principles of religious liberty and freedom of conscience were made known. The history of the Jews was told from mouth to mouth as those unacquainted with the three Hebrews asked who they were and how they came into Babylon. The Sabbath was proclaimed. The story of Jewish education was made known. The glory of Babylon was for the time forgotten as the splendor of the heavenly kingdom and the principles of God's government became the absorbing theme. Without doubt some men dated their conversion from that day, and forces were set in operation which paved the way for the return of the Jews a few years later. {1901 SNH, SDP 45.2}

Blessings