

## Daniel 3 – Nebuchadnezzar and His Golden Image

By Holly Effiom

V1

What is it Nebuchadnezzar is doing here in the beginning of this chapter?

What had taken place in the chapter before?

What was it the very same king said about Daniel's God at the end of the previous chapter?

Did Nebuchadnezzar know anything else about Daniel's God? How do you know?

How large is the image that Nebuchadnezzar built?

Who was this an image of? Was it Nebuchadnezzar?

LESSON: Recalling what had taken place in the previous chapter, do you get the sense that king Nebuchadnezzar stopped listening to anything else Daniel said after "Thou art the head of gold"? V38

VV2-7

What did Nebuchadnezzar want people to do regarding this image?

Who did he gather together for the dedication of the image?

What would the punishment be for not worshipping the image?

How is this section of scripture similar to Rev 13:11-18? How is Rev 13 different from this story in Daniel?

According to Rev 13, what will be worshipped? What does the beast from out of the sea represent? Dan 7:7-8; Rev 13:1

VV8-12

Who was the group that complained to the king?

What was their complaint?

Why would they have it in for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego?

Weren't the lives of this group saved because of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the previous chapter?

So, why would this group now be trying to get these men killed?

What exactly are the politics of the issue?

LESSON: One time, God had let me know through scripture that He was about to raise me up and elevate me above my peers. I cannot remember the specific scripture at the moment, but I remember that while indeed He did this, I felt like I was cast into a fiery furnace, and everyone and their mother seemed to have a grievance against me. I didn't feel like I was being elevated in ANY way. And this is when I learned the valuable lesson that when God is blessing us personally or professionally, that there is always someone or some group that hates the very idea of you being blessed.

I thought about Joseph, and how God was doing a great thing inside him, and his whole family turned against him. I thought about Moses, and how God did a great thing in giving him someone to love, and his brother and sister turned on him. I thought about Israel, and how God was making Himself known through them, and the world hated them for it. I thought about Jesus, who gave the world a priesthood to care for and protect the sheep, and these priests hated Jesus when He came in the flesh.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in Babylon, there was a whole tribe, the Chaldeans, who lost their position of having the king's ear.

Until Christ's rule comes, this will be the nature of things. So, one must be strong and continue to pursue after blessing from God, just as Jacob did, holding on to the Angel of the Lord, demanding a blessing (Gen 32:26); but understand, you have to fight for it. "...the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt 11:12

VV13-18

What did Nebuchadnezzar do when he learned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego didn't worship his gods?

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Why would this matter to him? Was Nebuchadnezzar very devout?

Do you get the sense the Nebuchadnezzar might not have known anything about the religion of these men?

Is this the same Nebuchadnezzar that spoke in Dan 2:47? What happened to that Nebuchadnezzar?

What is the attitude displayed in Dan 3:15b?

What does this teach us about mankind? About leadership?

Would you say that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego practiced their faith; keeping it to themselves?

When did it come out; when did it become a “problem”; when does your “religion” matter?

What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego consider deliverance to be? Did they consider death a type of deliverance?

Where did they get this confidence in God?

LESSON: There can be any number of reasons that Nebuchadnezzar changed, but this story is not about Nebuchadnezzar, though we can take some interesting lessons in human nature from his behavior. This story is about the “religion” of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

We’ve defined religion before as the outward expression of what is going on inside you, with regard to your relationship with God. It’s a natural consequence of bridging the distance between you and God.

So, I feel my relationship with God is going well – I’m spending time speaking with Him; reading His word; looking for Him in my everyday interactions with others. I spend time in a place with others who believe like me, and we can then encourage one another in our relationship with God. So, my “religion” tells the world that I attend this church in the place I live; I spend time talking to God in the mornings; I systematically study my God’s words; I apply what I learn in His word to my interactions with other people in the world. My “religion” guides my activities throughout the day – it guides how I live. My religion is an outgrowth of my relationship with God.

So, here’s the danger. Your “religion” can take on a life of its own. Monday: up at 5 AM, Make 2 cups of coffee, talk with God; 5:30 AM, study God’s word; 6:15 AM start preparing for work; 7:10 AM leave the house; 7:30 AM be at your desk at work. This takes place every morning except Saturday; and the next thing you know, you’re getting the Christmas music for the program that’s going to take place in December!

This sounds like a “ritual”, right? Your “religion” becomes “ritual”, with the very relationship that inspires it all being neglected. Now, I’m not saying that religion or even ritual is bad; I am telling you, from experience, “WATCH OUT!” They take on lives of their own and you end up serving the religion or ritual. Jesus said the same thing to the church of Ephesus in Rev 2:4. Keep your “first love” first!

Now, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego didn’t seem to have a problem keeping their priorities straight. What if I, who considers my relationship with God good, arrive at work one morning, and I’m told by my superiors to do something that I know goes against what my God desires, or be fired or be killed or something?

That’s when the rubber meets the road, right? All of my religion and rituals burn up in that fiery furnace, and the only thing that remains is my trust in God; my trust in my relationship with God. That’s all I have in that moment. I can put a cross or picture of Jesus Christ on every wall of my house, buy every one of Joel Osteen’s books, give all my money to missions, and sing faithfully every Sunday morning in choir and never miss a tithe, but only my *relationship* with God, only my *trust* in my relationship with God, can be what makes me stand true in the end. Amen.

VV19-23

What was Nebuchadnezzar truly furious about? Was he fearful for the souls of the young men – that they might go to hell for not bowing down to the image that he built?

What happened to him when he gave into his fury? Why does the scripture note his “visage”?

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- What can we learn about the nature of anger in human beings?
- How is this related to the conversation God had with Cain in Gen 4:6-7?
- How hot was the fiery furnace? How do you know how hot it was?
- Why is it significant to know the 3 men were fully dressed?

VV24-25

- Was Nebuchadnezzar able to see inside the furnace?
- Was he sitting near to the furnace? How do you know?
- Did Nebuchadnezzar actually want to watch as the 3 men were burned alive? Wouldn't the 3 men have died instantly? What would have actually made him want to see men burned alive? Could this be part of that change in his "visage"?
- What did Nebuchadnezzar see instead?

**LESSON:** It is important to revisit that conversation between God and Cain in Gen 4:6-7 because God is telling us about sin's nature. Sin:

1. Exists separate and independent of Cain (i.e., "God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good. Gen 1:31);
2. Wants Cain and what Cain has (i.e., "...and unto thee shall be his desire..." Gen 4:7c);
3. Seeks opportunities to take what belongs to Cain – it is an *opportunist* (i.e., "...sin lieth at the door..." Gen 4:7b).
4. Cain has power over sin. Only Cain can provide that opportunity – open the door – for sin to take what he has (i.e., "...and thou shalt rule over him." Gen 4:7d).

Dan 3:19 provides us a stark example of the concept laid out in Gen 4:6-7. King Nebuchadnezzar had become angry with his inability to control Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego – and this was indeed what was at issue, *control*. As he gave into his anger, hatred rushed in and changed him, making him demand the furnace be heated 7 times hotter, and making him want to even *watch* as men, *fellow* human beings, are burned alive!

When men give in to their anger they open that door that allows sin to:

1. Take what they have – their righteous standing before God!
2. Take them places they never even *imagined* they would go – becoming voyeurs to torture and murder!
3. Take away their glory as human beings, made in the very image of God Himself!

For what did Cain do? He *murdered* his brother and buried him beneath a heap of dirt, as if he was *nothing!* As if he didn't have a father and mother who would *miss* him!

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VV26-28

- What does Nebuchadnezzar do now?
- What does his attitude seem to be now? How can you tell?
- Who all saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego come out of the fiery flames?
- Was the hair of the 3 men singed off? Was their clothing burned? Did they even smell of fire?
- What does Nebuchadnezzar say then?
- Is Nebuchadnezzar a "worshipper" of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego?

**LESSON:** Notice what it was that changed Nebuchadnezzar's attitude?

1. He saw God move mightily to protect those who trust in Him.
2. He saw the absolute trust Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had in their God.

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3. He saw the effect their faith had on him – he changed his words; and this was unheard of in Oriental leadership.
4. He saw that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were willing to yield their bodies for what they believed.

It was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego's attitude and behavior that changed Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward them – and seeing God act on their behalf didn't hurt either!

What is God calling us to do as Christians?

VV29-30

What decree does Nebuchadnezzar make?

What are the rewards to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego for their faithfulness?

Is Nebuchadnezzar a “worshipper” of God by the end of this story?

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