

Bible Study Daniel 3

[PPT 1] Chapter 3 advances the revelation given in Chapters 1&2.

There God had revealed Himself as the only God who can reveal the unknown. Chapter 3 will show that Yahweh is powerful enough to control history miraculously. [PPT 2] Chapter 2 demonstrated the wisdom of God, and [PPT 3] Chapter 3 the power of God.

Vs1) [PPT 4] We are used to seeing tall memorials and buildings but think of how the Babylonians, 600 years before Christ would have reacted to seeing this giant statue.

[PPT 5] *Why do you think the king choose to put the statue on the plane?*

Ans: Appear larger and taller than everything else and can be seen from great distances. At sea when any object first appears on the horizon it is 14 miles away, but this is 90 feet tall.

The Aramaic word for image (ṣelēm) in verse 1 is the same word that described the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream in Daniel Ch 2. Using the same word here Daniel is making the connection between Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the statue he erected on the plain of Dura meaning, it may have been an image of the king himself.

It is also possible that the image represented one of the Babylonian gods. Because of the coming command to "*fall down and worship*" the image which is repeated six times in this chapter (Vs 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14), it seems the image was to be considered god-like.

[PPT 6] *Based on verse one what should Nebuchadnezzar have learned (but failed to do so) from the interpretation of his dream in Ch 2? (Hint head of gold)*

Nebuchadnezzar does not yet accept the sovereignty of God over history. Although Daniel told him the dream and that its interpretation was trustworthy (2:45), he still believed he could change the course of history. His was now not only the head of gold, but the whole image was of gold. By this Nebuchadnezzar was saying: *"I don't care what the God of heaven has said in a dream; my kingdom of Babylon will not fall to another Gentile kingdom."*

Vs 2-3 no notes) All the government officials who have power over people are present and waiting for the dedication to begin. Of those present, from what we are told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego may have been the only Hebrews summoned.

Vs 4-5) The power of music in worship situations, especially involving a large crowd, cannot be overstated. It seems man was made with a God-given propensity to respond to beautiful music, especially when used in worship. The different musical instruments would have influenced the emotions of the different nationalities so that they would not hesitate to bow in worship. *What is your favorite musical instrument?* Its music would have been there to move and influence you. In our day, discernment is needed by our pastors and worship leaders, to ensure the music we offer up in praise and worship is Biblically informed rather than bypassing our mental faculties in favor of unrestrained emotion.

It is only after the officials summoned by Nebuchadnezzar are all assembled, the king's herald announced *"Fall down and worship the gold image."* They now know this was more than a political assembly; it was also a religious service that called for a total commitment on the part of the worshipers. At least eleven times in this chapter the word *"worship"* is used emphasizing a total commitment.

Notice while the image was intended to be worshipped; it is never called a god. Since no specific god is mentioned, it may be that Nebuchadnezzar was not honoring one of the gods of Babylon, but rather was introducing a new form of religious worship with this image.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to establish a unified one-world government and a unified one-world religion. All who served under him were to recognize both his political and religious authority. This is a type of the anti-Christ described in the book of Revelation.

Vs6-7) The original reads literally, *"As soon as they were hearing they were falling down."* The king had achieved the unity he wanted.

This is what is really taking place: [PPT 7] Job 2:4 *But Satan answered the Lord, "Skin for skin! Indeed, a man will give up all that he has to save his life!*

But there were three men in the crowd who stood tall when everyone else bowed. Why didn't all the Jews challenge the command? As in our culture today a common theme is that of tolerance, go alone to get along.

[PPT 8] The idea of unified religion and peace at any price can be seen in the bumper sticker with the words coexist or tolerance. Out of this grew the lesbian, queer mess we see promoted in our day. It denies the reality of objective truth, that there is One God who alone is true and who has defined acceptable ethical behavior. As a believer, one who has a living relationship with Jesus Christ, our very existence is a testimony against this moral relativism. We are "thorns in the side" of paganism and humanism. If we remain true to God, we will become the subjects of controversy and persecution because we testify against their worldview. This is not new; this is what takes place in verse 8.

Vs 8) When the term "*Jew*" is used in the Old Testament it usually appears as a derogatory term, as it is here. Jew was a term that the Israelites' enemies used to describe them. Those who refused to worship could have been described as certain individuals, or certain leaders. But it was their identity as Jews their accusers emphasized when describing their nonconforming behavior to the king.

[PPT 9] Behind all anti-Jewish movements throughout history, is Satan himself. (Rev. 12:10). Satan knew that through this divinely chosen people would come the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of all mankind (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 9:4-5). As God's chosen nation, Israel is unique. The very idea that God would choose one people for a unique purpose leads to resentment and jealousy on the part of other people groups and accusations of the unfairness of God. Yet, God has chosen to set the Jews apart from the nations, as the line of the Messiah and as a nation to make God known to the rest of the nations.

[PPT 10] Israel's role requires that she never assimilate with the nations, adopting their practices and worldview (Eze. 20:32-33, Ex. 33:16, Num. 23:9, Est. 3:8). Because of this, the Jews will always be "different", standing out from the other peoples of the earth, experiencing the unwelcome attention and jealousy of other nations. Israel is also a thorn in the side of humanism's long-held global dream of unification.

Vs 9-12) [PPT 11] Notice the distinction made in the words "*They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image*". Three times, once in verse 12 by the Chaldeans, once in verse 14 by the King, and once in verse 18 by the three Hebrews, the worship of Babylon's deities is specifically made distinct from worshiping the golden image the king had made.

We are not told where Daniel is at this time but apparently, he is not there to help them go through the difficulties they faced in this chapter.

[PPT 12] While there may be a time in our Christian walk when we benefit from the guidance and example of a mature brother or sister in Christ, we should expect, sooner or later, that we'll need to be able to stand on our own two feet. Mature Christian friends can become idols for us. So, sometimes God will put us in a situation where we won't have the opportunity to have a more mature believer available to consult.

The Chaldeans had a special hatred for Daniel and his friends. The Chaldeans were the natives of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself was a Chaldean. Daniel and his three friends were outsiders, yet they had higher positions in Nebuchadnezzar's administration than the Chaldeans according to 2:48-49. The Chaldeans seem to be acting out of jealousy and racial prejudice. The words *certain Jews whom you have appointed* in verse 12 were to remind the king that he had given these "Jews" positions of authority in his administration.

Vs 13-15 note) The king is in a fit of anger, he has conquered many cities and nations but he could not conquer himself (Prov 16:32).

[PPT 13] In anger he says: "*What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?*" It seems that although Nebuchadnezzar remembers the demonstration of the superiority of the God of the Hebrews over Babylonian gods in interpreting his dream in chapter 2, he cannot bring himself to believe that the God of the Jews would also be able to deliver these three Jews from his hand. Yahweh is the God of information and wisdom but not the God of all power.

[PPT 14] In much the same way, many people today believe that the Bible is God's word, but they do not believe that He can deliver them from their serious personal problems, much less the world's problems.

Vs 16) The KJV reads "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." The Aramaic word (hashhin) translated as "*careful*," may be considered a technical word for "*need*." This is why the NASB translates it as "We do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter." It means we don't need to defend ourselves or our God. God is perfectly capable of defending Himself and of taking care of His people. The word "*we*" is emphatic in the original text and implies a contrast with Yahweh. "We do not need to" give an answer, but God would give the king an answer.

The boldness with which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego respond to Nebuchadnezzar reflects their predetermined resolve to obey God. Because they had been living according to Biblical principles, they did not need to think it over, as would have been necessary if they had practiced situational ethics, which is popular among some believers today.

Vs 17-18 (No notes) The stand these three men take must have brought conviction to the other Jews in Babylon who were compromising with the enemy.

[PPT 15] Based on verse 17 we understand they were not questioning God's ability in verse 18 when they say "*But even if He does not*" (Isa. 43:2-3). What they were not certain of at this time was if it was according to His sovereign purpose. They believed it would be presumptuous to assume that God's purpose required their rescue. Like the three young men we also should remember that faith in God may not provide deliverance in every circumstance.

[PPT 16] Hebrews 11:36 begins a list of names of “others” who had faith but didn’t see God’s miraculous deliverance as He did for those listed in the first thirty-five verses of Hebrews chapter 11. Whenever we express our objections concerning those in authority over us, we are to be willing to embrace the consequences of that stand without complaint.

[PPT 17] Acts 12:1-2 *About that time Herod the King laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

God choose not to deliver but allowed Herod to kill James, but nine verses later divinely deliver Peter

[PPT 18] Acts 12:11 *When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”*

[PPT 19] *How we can acquire the ability to face danger without compromise in our witness for God? (1) Coming to terms with God’s sovereignty. Like the 3 Hebrews we need to mature in our Christian walk to where we trust that whatever happens to us delivered or not delivered is in agreement with God’s timing and His will for our lives.*

[PPT 20] (2) Becoming confident that we know the truth (God’s Word, the Scriptures).

[PPT 21] (3) By having a higher priority on God’s truth than our own life. All of these require an eternal life mindset; a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as our savior.

Vs 19-23) [PPT 22] The furnace may have looked something like this. From carvings discovered it seems that Mesopotamian smelting furnaces had a large opening at the top to put the ore into (3 *thrown into*) and there would be a smaller opening at ground level for the wood to produce the heat (*Neb see into-come out*).

Vs 24-25) [PPT 23] **Rhetorical Question:** *Who did Nebuchadnezzar think the fourth person in the flames was and who was he really?*

1) The Babylonians believed that their gods had sons. When Nebuchadnezzar said that the fourth person in the furnace looked like a son of the gods, this was his pagan way of saying that the fourth person looked like a divine or supernatural being.

2) Who was he really? In favor of the fourth person being an angel is Nebuchadnezzar's statement in verse 28 where he will say *"who has sent His angel and delivered His servants"*. Also, there are many passages in the OT where angels are referred to as sons of God (Gen. 6:2-4; Deu. 32:8; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). But it should be noted that the Aramaic word translated angel was also used for deity.

Also, in favor of an angel is the later delivery of Daniel from the lion's den in chapter 6 where Daniel says *"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths"*.

As to who he actually was, many conservative Christian commentators take the individual in both chapters 3 and 6 to be the Angel of the Lord, a pre-incarnate representation of the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ.

[PPT 24] What does this tell us about God's relationship with us, His people? He is in it with them and us. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of the sheep in Heb 13, who walks with his people even through the valley of the shadow of death in Ps 23.

[PPT 25] Vs 26) The deliverance which God has accomplished for us in some ways, is like that described in Daniel 3.

[PPT 26] It is, first and foremost, God's deliverance.

[PPT 27] Second, it is not a deliverance out of all their suffering and trials, but one which exists because God Himself experienced the fire.

[PPT 28] Third, as the fourth person was present with the Hebrews in the king's furnace, Christ has endured the wrath of God, in our place. We are delivered from God's eternal wrath, a fiery furnace, because Jesus Christ, the Son of God suffered for us in our place on the cross of Calvary. The 3 Hebrews come out but he remained in the fire of the furnace and would not come down from the cross but died there in our place.

Vs 27-30 no notes) [PPT 29] Nebuchadnezzar's decree determined the way religion was to be practiced in Babylon for years. Had the events of chapter 3 not taken place and had the king not made the decree of verse 29, the Hebrews would not have been able to legally practice their worship of Yahweh in Babylon. In the sovereignty of God, the Chaldeans pressed the connection of these three Hebrews with the Jews as a people. The end result guaranteed all Hebrews freedom of worship in Babylon.

In the sovereignty of God men and women suffered the adversities of fire that you and I can legally exercise our freedom of religion this morning in our country also.