

BOOK OF DANIEL
THE THREE HEBREW CHILDREN
DANIEL 3

Introduction

In Daniel Chapter 1 we met the three friends of Daniel—**Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah**—whom we will refer to tonight by their Babylonian names—**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** and we may also collectively refer to them at times as **the Three Hebrew Children**.

These **Three Hebrew Children** were influenced in a very positive way by Daniel to not defile themselves with the kings’s meat and wine, but rather to stand by their convictions along with Daniel.

Many captives were taken when Judah was invaded by the Babylonians. Other young people were in the same predicament as were Daniel and his three friends. But we see that only these four stood by their principles!

In Chapter 3, we find that **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** had learned to stand on their own even when Daniel’s great influence wasn’t around!

I. THE WICKED KING’S COMMAND! (Daniel 3:1-7)

A. An Image Constructed! (Vs 1)

We see how that Nebuchadnezzar constructed a golden statue which was approximately 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and set it up in the Plain of Dura near Babylon.

Consider that the worth of the image today, if the image were pure gold, would be approximately \$80 trillion @ \$1140/per ounce check of gold price on this past Friday.

B. The Reasons For This Image!:

1. The First Real Possibility—Was A Reason As Old As The Devil Himself—Pride! (i.e. Elevate Himself)

In reading Daniel 2, we learn that Daniel interpreted the king’s dream and told Nebuchadnezzar that HE was the head of gold!

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The king very possibly got “*the big head*” and was so full of **pride** and **vanity** that HE wanted to be the whole thing!

Pride leads people to do all kinds of things that are contrary to God! Oh how the Bible warns us against the evils of **pride**!

Psalm 10:4—“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” (Cf. Earlier in Daniel 2:47)

Proverbs 13:10—“Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” (Cf. Daniel 3:13)

Proverbs 16:8—“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (In his own life in Daniel 4 and in the life of his grandson in Daniel 5.)

Proverbs 29:23—“A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

2. The Second Real Possibility—Was To Consolidate His Empire Through A Common Religion!

In fact, this is the second of three great attempts that are recorded to institute a one-world religion.

The first occurred at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) and the last will take place in Jerusalem during the tribulation period (Revelation 13).

This was nothing more than a coerced ecumenical religion! (i.e. “*This is the way you will worship!*”)

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I believe that its coming again rapidly in a country we all know and love very soon—as well as all around the world! Think about recent events!

In relation to Nebuchadnezzar's image, consider the statement made by Balder von Schirach, director of German youth, on July 20, 1936. *"One cannot be a good German and at the same time deny God, but an avowal of faith in the eternal Germany is at the same time an avowal of faith in the eternal God. Whoever serves Adolph Hitler, the Fuhrer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany, serves God."*

Satan attempts to turn man's religious nature away from the true God to his counterfeit! Here in Daniel's day and time, Nebuchadnezzar was Satan's counterfeit!

C. The Location Of This Image! (Vs 1)

The image was located in the plain of *Dura*. "*Dura*" means "*circle*" or "*dwelling*."

No doubt this area was big enough to accommodate some very large crowds required both for the dedication worship ceremony and the subsequent required worship!

It is very possible that it was near the population center of Babylon!

D. The Call To The Dedication! (Vs 2-3)

The king required every VIP in all the empire to assemble in the Plain of *Dura* on a scheduled day!

E. Notice How Important Music Was In The Worship! (3:4-5)

When dedication day arrived, a large orchestra was on hand! The music no doubt was used to work the people into a frenzy!

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1. At the sound of the music, all those assembled were commanded to fall down and worship the statue!

2. Failure to fall down and worship the statue would result in an instant death sentence that would be carried out by being thrown into a burning fiery furnace! (3:6)

There is little doubt that the entire crowd could see this furnace and could watch the flames and smoke billowing forth from it.

It is interesting to note that this was one of the Babylonians' preferred methods of execution. The Romans executed criminals through crucifixion, the Jews by stoning, and the Babylonians by burning.

(In Jeremiah 29:22, Jeremiah mentions two false prophets who were to be put to death in this matter in Babylon.)

This was probably one of the most persuasive altar call of all times—bow or burn.

We see how this combination of music and fear was very compelling!

3. The people responded to the music as they were told! (3:7)

THE WICKED KING'S COMMAND!

II. THE RIGHTEOUS HEBREWS' STAND! (Daniel 3:8-23)

A. Their Action!

We could say that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained standing during the "*invitation*" so to speak!

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They refused to bow to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had erected!

Now the question that comes to our mind here is—WHERE IS DANIEL?!

It is apparent that Daniel was not present at the dedication service. We don't know where Daniel was, but it is quite possible that with his position, he was out of the country at the time on the king's business.

His duties as prime minister would have required him to travel extensively!

B. The Accusation!

The failure of these three to bow to the image was immediately reported to the king by some jealous Babylonian officials!
(3:8-12)

Consider how that these were some of the ones who previously saved from sure death by the prayers of these three and Daniel and by the resulting action by Daniel!

It is sad when the folks you help end up trying to hurt you!
Sometimes it happens!

C. Nebuchadnezzar's Anger! (3:13)

He was not very happy with these three Hebrews!
Did you notice the words "*rage*" and "*fury*"?
"*Rage*" means "*violent anger.*" "*Fury*" means "*anger.*"

D. One Final Chance! (3:14-15)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given the benefit of the doubt. They were brought to Nebuchadnezzar himself and offered a final chance to bow down.

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E. All Three Of Them Refuse! (3:16-18)

Especially noteworthy are the words "*our God is able.*" This phrase is often found in the New Testament.

1. Our God Is Able To Save!

Hebrews 7:25—“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

2. Our God Is Able To Succour!

Hebrews 2:18—“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

3. Our God Is Able To Secure!

Jude 24—“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”

2 Timothy 1:12—“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

4. Our God Is Able To Surpass!

Ephesians 3:20—“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”

The testimony of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was similar to that of Job.

Job 13:15—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.”

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These three youths were no doubt aware of the many excuses available to them for bowing down at this private meeting.

For example:

- a. They could have said, *“Why not join the system. You can’t fight city hall!”*
- b. They could have said, *“We’ll cooperate with old Neb and win him to Christ!”*
- c. They could have had the attitude that *“A living dog is better than a dead lion—better red than dead!”* or even *“He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day!”*
- d. They could have said, *“Well, Daniel our leader is not here to make the right decision for us, so we’ll just do what we are asked.”*

All these excuses might have been offered. But they weren’t.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been brought up under the Ten Commandments of Moses. Especially burned in their minds was the second law:

Exodus 20:4-5--“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.”

F. The Insane Rage Of The King! (3:19-21)

Next, we see that in an insane rage, Nebuchadnezzar (who has now totally lost control of himself), orders the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than normal and then had some of his most mighty men to bind the three Hebrews and cast them in the furnace.

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G. The Collateral Damage! (3:22)

The horrible decree is carried out and it results in the accidental deaths of those mighty men who are burned while throwing the three men in the furnace.

E. The End Of The Hebrews!?! (3:23)

The three Hebrews are seen falling headlong and bound into the hellish fires that were meant to be their end. But wait!

THE WICKED KING’S COMMAND!

THE RIGHTEOUS HEBREW’S STAND!

III. THE LORD’S DELIVERING HAND! (Daniel 3:24-25)

The wicked and angry king is trying to enjoy the show of his superiority over these three and then he sees something that he can’t believe.

A. He Sees Them Walking!

Thus the only thing the fire burned was their shackles, for they were all bound when thrown in.

B. He Sees The LORD With Them!

He sees One *“like the Son of God,”* or literally, *“one like a Son of the Gods.”*

As far as we know, Nebuchadnezzar was unaware of the Trinity, but he was looking upon the very Son of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ!

C. The Call To Come Out Of The Fire! (3:26-27)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are called to come out of the fire! It says that *“the fire had no power”* on them! There was no burning of their bodies or clothing, no singeing of their hair, and no smell of the fire on them!

D. The Testimony From This Heathen King! (3:28)

And what produced this noble testimony?

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The conduct of these three noble Jews. Had they been just time-servers, the name of the true God would not been known in Babylon.

E. The Royal Decree! (3:29)

Though by the decree the king does not force the people to worship the true God, the God of these Three Hebrew Children, yet he requires them to treat him with reverence!

F. Honor Bestowed On These Faithful Men! (3:30)

What honor does the Lord put on these that were steadfast in the faith?! Make no mistake—the honor appears to come from King Nebuchadnezzar, actually came from the LORD!

Conclusion

Four Lessons From The Lives Of These Three Men:

- 1. God's dearest servants are sometimes called to pass through heavy trials! (Hebrews 11:33-40)**
- 2. God is able to deliver when help seems farthest off!**
He does not promise to keep us free from trouble, but he does promise to be with us in the trouble.
- 3. God's permitted furnace purifies, but never destroys us!**
Men may be able to destroy our flesh, but that is all they can do!
- 4. God's children must never be ashamed of Him!**
No matter how adverse the situation, we must be bold and unshaken in our witness.

(Cf. Psalm 27:1; 62:1-6; Romans 8:31-39)