

Daniel 3 “Wouldn’t Take A Knee”

Dan. 3: 1 Nebuchadnezzar erects an image and demands everyone worship it.

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was ninety feet tall and nine feet wide, set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Note: Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold: There is considerable debate regarding when this happened. Some think it was a short time after the events of Daniel 2, but others think it happened many years later.

- There is a link between Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 and the image he made in Daniel 3. After Daniels interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the immense statue and its meaning; he deliberately made an entire statue of gold, to proclaim the day of his reign and authority would never end – in contradiction to God’s declared plan of Daniel 2.

The Statue: An image of gold: The image was more like a stylized obelisk rather than a normal statue, being 90 feet high and 9 feet wide.

Possibly made of a wood/clay structure overlaid with gold.

Dan. 3:2-3 All Babylon’s dignitaries gathered at the dedication of the image.

“King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather 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 set up. 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.”

- **Satrap** is a Persian loan word that “means protector of the realm.” It refers to a specific category of public officials.
- **All the officials of the provinces, were to come to the dedication of the image:** The demand that all come to the dedication ceremony means that Nebuchadnezzar meant to use the worship of this image as a test of allegiance.

Dan 3: 4-6 The command to worship the image.

“Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, down, oples, nations, and languages, 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; and whoever does not fall down, and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

Horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery: This was an impressive orchestra.

- **Whoever does not fall down, and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** The command was backed up by a powerful threat. Nebuchadnezzar regarded the refusal to worship the image as treason, not only as a religious offense.
- Nebuchadnezzar was like many politicians who often seem willing to use religion to strengthen their grip on political power.

An example comes from 1960 when the President of Ghana had a larger than life-size statue of himself erected in front of the national house of Parliament. An inscription on the side of the statue read, “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you.”

- **A burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar did not allow lawbreakers to go unpunished.
- In an ancient cuneiform writing, Nebuchadnezzar was described as so devoted to justice that “he did not rest night or day.” The document also tells of a criminal guilty of a second offense who was decapitated, and afterwards a stone image of his head was displayed as a warning.

The crowd obeys Nebuchadnezzar’s command.

“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.’

- **Fell down and worshiped the gold image:** This indicates as soon as they heard they were falling down. There was total and immediate obedience to Nebuchadnezzar’s command.

Dan. 3: 8-12 **Three Hebrew men refuse the demand.**

- Certain Chaldeans accuse the three Hebrew men.

“Therefore, at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! 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; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are

certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; 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.”

- These Chaldeans had an obvious political motivation against these Jews who were promoted to high office along with Daniel in the events recorded in the previous chapter. Jealousy

Accusation: **They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image:**

- Their actions were not public, but neither were they hidden. These three Hebrew men must have known they would be discovered, yet they obeyed God rather than man.
**“You will not be able to go through life without being discovered:
a lighted candle cannot be hidden”**

Matt 5:15 **“No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.”**

- Many of God’s people try to lay low to avoid persecution or rejection, but Jesus has this to say about such:

Luke 9:26 “If anyone is ashamed of Me and My message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when He returns in His glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.”

Rev 21:8 **“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”**

Dan 3:13-15 **Nebuchadnezzar interviews the disobedient Hebrew men.**

“Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So, they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? 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?”

- **Is it true:** To his credit, Nebuchadnezzar did not accept the accusation on hearsay. He made sure of it with a personal interview. This was an even greater test for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
- It is one thing to make a stand for God; it is a greater thing to stick to your stand when pointedly asked, “**Is it true?**”
- Peter followed Jesus after His arrest, but he wilted and denied Jesus when asked, “**Is it true?**”

What about me and you today?

- **But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate losing face on such an important occasion. His pride made him declare, “You shall have no other gods than me.”

Imagine the enormous pressure on Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to compromise:

- Everything in front of them – the king, the furnace, the music, their compatriots, their competitors – all of it conspired to convince them to compromise.
- Yet God was more real to them than any of those things.
- **Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?** Nebuchadnezzar thought nothing of insulting all gods with this statement. He is more of a secularist or a humanist than a theist. The god he really believes in was himself, not the gods of Babylon.

The three Hebrew men insist they will never worship the image.

The three answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 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. But if not, let it be known to you, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

We have no need to answer you: They had **no need** to defend themselves. Their guilt in the matter was clear – they clearly would not bow down to this image.

Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us: They showed a good understanding and appreciation of God’s great power. In fact, they knew that God was able to save them from both the **burning fiery furnace** and from the **hand** of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

BUT IF NOT: In this, the Jewish men show they had a good understanding and appreciation of submission to God. They knew God's power, but they also knew that they must do what was right even if God did not do what they expect or hope Him to do.

We often complain & whine about our rights and what is fair.

Often it is better to make a stand and endure our difficulty, leaving our fate in God's hands.

- They did not doubt God's ability, but neither did they presume to know God's will.
- They agreed with Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" Job 13:15.
- They recognized that God's plan might be different than their desires.
- We have our own desires and dreams, and we pray that God fulfills them. But if He doesn't, we can't turn our back on Him.
- In our day, many do love Jesus and think highly of Him – yet they are far from God because they also love and worship the world, sin, and self.
- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

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: It took great faith to say this. God brought them to this place of great faith by preparing them with tests in lesser challenging areas:

- These men stood firm when challenged to eat impure foods and they saw God bless their obedience. That gave them the courage to obey now, when the stakes were much higher.

Many people fail in their obedience because they wait for something "big" to test their faith before they really start to obey God.

People fill their lives with many small compromises; yet tell themselves that they will stand firm when it really matters. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah show us that obedience to God in small things really matters.

Let it be known to you, O king: Their statement is remarkable for what it does not have – any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this it would be easy to think of a thousand excuses that justify compromise.

1. They might have said, "There is nothing to gain by resisting; wouldn't we do better by living?" It is easy to say, "We must live," but in reality, we all must die – so why not die making a stand for God?

2. They might have said, “We are in a different place; in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Yet they knew that God has unlimited jurisdiction. We must do more than “perform” acts of religious obedience when people are watching us.
3. They might have said, “We will lose our jobs and our standard of living.” Often when God blesses us, we make the blessing an idol and compromise God to keep what we have.
4. They might have said, “After all, we are not being called to renounce our God.” They did not have a compromised conscience that said, “We are not bowing down to the idol, but only bowing down in respect for the king, or in honor of the music.”
5. They might have said, “Everybody else is doing it.” Instead, they stood uncompromisingly, willing to stand alone with God.
6. They might have said, “It’s only once, and not for very long. Ten minutes, just for the king. It is stupid to throw our lives away for ten minutes.” These men knew that ten minutes could change an entire life.
7. They might have said, “This is more than can be expected of us; God will understand just this once.”

Dan 3:19-23 The three men are cast violently into the furnace.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 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. Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And these three men, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”

- **Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury:** We get the feeling that prior to their statement Nebuchadnezzar spoke kindly, but after hearing their bold challenge **the expression on his face changed.**
- Despite the intense intimidation, the men stayed courageous in their confession of faith.

By yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself.

There shall come a day when the man/woman that was ashamed of Christ will him/herself be ashamed: he/she will wonder where they can hide their guilty head!

Dan 3:24-25 **Nebuchadnezzar sees four alive and well in the furnace.**

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; 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.” “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.”

It was an Old Testament **Christophany**- the appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament

- There is the furnace that man prepares.
- There is the furnace that satan prepares.
- There is the furnace that God prepares.
- God can deliver us from a trial, or He can miraculously sustain and strengthen us in a trial.

We need to stop trying to pray our way out of problems that we have behaved our way into!

Servants of the Highest God: Before they were out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that these men served the true God, the God **Most High**.

This whole account illustrates the future of those who are faithful to God no matter what the trial is.

- Nebuchadnezzar is like the Antichrist, who will force the whole world into one religion of idolatry.
- Nebuchadnezzar’s image is like the image described in Revelation 13, that the whole world will be commanded to worship.
- The fiery furnace is like the Great Tribulation, which will be great affliction for the Jews and all who receive the Lord during that time.
- The three Hebrew men are like Israel and all who worship Jesus/Yeshua who will be preserved.

- The executioners who perished are like those in league with the Antichrist, who Jesus will repay at His return.
- He is the God of the Hebrews (**the God of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.**
- He is the God who sends a Savior (**who sent His Angel**).
- He is the God of great power (**delivered His servants**).
- He is the God worthy of trust (**who trusted in Him**).
- He is the God worthy of full surrender (**frustrated the king's word and yielded their bodies**).