

Lecture #4

Daniel 3:1-30

DANIEL 3:1-18

Regardless of the time period or regardless of the corruptness of a political leader, God is still looking for faithful people who will stand out and stand up as a witness for Him. Edmund Burke of the 1700's has been called "the most brilliant and original thinker ever to sit in the British House of Commons." Edmund Burke said, "The only thing needed for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Thank God back in Daniel's day, during the Babylonian captivity, four young godly men did something and stood for something.

One would have thought that Nebuchadnezzar would have been humbled by the prophetic interpretation of his dream given by Daniel and would have truly wanted to be right with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His testimony initially looked like real repentance (Dan. 2:47). It appeared as though Nebuchadnezzar had truly come to terms with God. But there are some instant, emotional conversions which aren't real. There are people who walk down aisles all emotionally moved, but not really spiritually resolved, and that is what happened here.

Apparently, as time progressed, Nebuchadnezzar became more and more impressed with himself. He became more and more proud.

There is no question that God gives Nebuchadnezzar several opportunities to come to terms with the reality of His sovereignty. But time and time again Nebuchadnezzar seems to lapse into an arrogant rebellion against God and against God's people.

**GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN EVEN WHEN LEADERS PROMOTE PROUD, ABOMINABLE THINGS AND GOD WILL ALWAYS USE, HONOR AND PROTECT THOSE WHO STAY FAITHFUL TO HIM, WHO REFUSE TO CONFORM TO THAT WHICH IS PAGAN.**

Those who purpose to do what is right before God will always be blessed by God no matter what the environment. These three young men are really put to their own personal test, even without Daniel. Daniel is not in this episode and most believe he was out of the area overseeing business for Nebuchadnezzar.

**Daniel 3:1** – Nebuchadnezzar made an image.

We don't know exactly how long a period of time transpired between the events of chapter 2 and chapter 3, but apparently enough time transpired for Nebuchadnezzar to begin to forget about God and think more and more about himself and his own greatness.

More than likely, based on the fact that Daniel had revealed that in his dream he was the head of gold (2:38), Nebuchadnezzar constructed an image of gold in his own honor, which was about ninety feet tall and about nine feet wide. He put the image in the plain of Dura. The plain was a relatively flat piece of land which was surrounded by mountains, making the image very visible from a long distance. Archeologists, specifically the archeologist Oppert, uncovered the base or pedestal of something impressive about six miles S.E. of Babylon, sixteen miles S.W. of Baghdad, which was very tall and very visible in this plain. Thomas Robinson said that Oppert discovered it was the base of some "colossal statue."

**Daniel 3:2-3** – Nebuchadnezzar invites all Babylonian leaders to come dedicate the image.

As we look at the eight groups of people specifically named, it becomes apparent that all major political and judicial rulers were invited to see and dedicate the image.

- 1) Satraps were invited - a satrap was a protector or guardian of the king's realm. He had both civil and military power.
- 2) Prefects were invited - the word refers to a supervisor over military men, like a military general.
- 3) Governors were invited - this refers to one who rules over an assigned region, more of a civil ruler than a military ruler.
- 4) Counselors were invited - this refers to a chief arbitrator in government.
- 5) Treasurers were invited - this refers to those who managed the kingdom funds.
- 6) Judges were invited - this is a word that refers to a lawyer or guardian of the law.
- 7) Magistrates were invited - this refers to one who actually handed out sentences based on law; they were responsible for executing justice.
- 8) Rulers were invited - refers to all other leaders not classified in the above classifications.

All of these political and judicial leaders were assembled for the purpose of dedicating this impressive image. This is not the kind of group you want to offend. These are the highest most powerful administrators from the Babylonian world.

I am certain that some of these Babylonian leaders were still upset by the appointment of Jews like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and certainly the wise approach here would be for these four not to offend this impressive list of leaders.

This is the beginning of the satanic world system of Gentile powers who will dominate the world and one of the features is forced religion. This will intensify until finally everyone in the world will be forced to worship one person - the Antichrist.

**Daniel 3:4-6** – Nebuchadnezzar instructs that all people fall down and worship the image.

In **verse 4** we see that the command is given to all people regardless of their language. When they hear the musical instruments sound, they were to fall down and worship the image and if they didn't do it, they would be cast into a furnace which has a blazing fire burning in it. Notice the word "worship" is used eleven times in this chapter (v. 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15-twice, 18, 28). The word means to worship something so that you actually fall down before it.

C.I. Scofield observed that as the end of the age nears there will be an increased emphasis on worship that is satanically directed. This system of religion promotes a united ecumenical worship. This pictures what the Antichrist will do - take the mark and worship him or die (Rev. 13:15).

The punishment of death by burning in an oven was a Babylonian punishment. The punishment the Medes and Persians seemed to use was one of casting into a lion's den. Greece would punish with a sword and Rome would use as its key method of punishment crucifixion. However, even with the threat of being thrown into a fiery furnace, the way Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego calculated it - it was better to physically go into a fiery furnace than to eternally go into the fires of hell. Most people today do not take pending judgment seriously. Most would rather do anything to escape some temporal problem than to realize there is an eternal judgment at stake.

Now I want you to notice **verse 5** and the list of instruments and the type of music that were used in this satanic, idolatrous worship. It has been said that music has the power to soothe the beast in a man and it also has the power to release the savage beast in a man. One writer observed that music can be a wonderful tool and treasure of God or it can be a destructive weapon of Satan.

- 1) Horn - some wind instrument, like a curved ram's horn
- 2) Flute - refers to an instrument that has a hiss or whistle, made of reeds
- 3) Lyre - an instrument like a harp with several strings
- 4) Trigon - triangular shaped instrument with four strings
- 5) Psaltery - triangular shaped instrument with twenty strings below sounding board
- 6) Bagpipe - typical bagpipe type instrument
- 7) All kinds of music - all other types of instruments used which are not named

Blended together these instruments could make beautiful music. But regardless of the impressiveness of the orchestra, it was satanic.

Satanic music is a big production. Lots of instruments. Lots of people playing instruments. The music touches and moves people's emotions, and even though it is in "worship" services it is not from God and it does not glorify God. Nebuchadnezzar had all kinds of music at his heathen worship services.

I believe it is evil to sit in church and listen to musicians play various types of music who:

- 1) Do not know the Lord;
  - 2) Play music other than that which truly worships God.
- Ironside said: "People may call it worship to sit and listen to a trained and possibly unconverted choir and orchestra rendering sweet and touching strains, but the music ... has nothing to do with true adoration of the Father and the Son, which must be in spirit and in truth to be acceptable to God" (p. 48).

**Daniel 3:7** – Nebuchadnezzar insists in immediate incorporation of worship of the image.

As soon as instructions were given, the sound of the instruments went forth and all peoples present from all nations and languages fell down to worship the image set up by the king.

One of the first things God demands is that no other gods be worshipped but Him. God is a jealous God and there is a vain, fleshly, invented-by-men, religious worship that is of no value to God (Colossians 2:22-23).

**Daniel 3:8-12** – Nebuchadnezzar's informants notify him of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Certain "Chaldeans" noticed that three Jewish young men did not worship the golden image when the instruments sounded. It is debated as to where Daniel was at the time and the most logical answer to that is he wasn't present at the dedication. These three would not have been hard to spot because everyone else bowed down and they would have been the only three left standing. Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar could not see them himself, but certain Chaldean informants could see them and they, of course, reported it to him.

They were jealous of these highly promoted Jews. Daniel and these three were in good favor with the king. They won the academic awards and they were rising fast in government; plus they had been used to interpret his dream. Jealousy and envy are terrible sins. They will consume you to the point where you will do hurtful and even hateful things against another. Cain was jealous of Abel and he murdered him. Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph and they sold him. Saul was jealous of David and he pursued him and tried to kill him. The religious leaders were jealous of Jesus and they murdered Him (Matthew 27:18). As John Chrysostom said, just "as a moth gnaws at a garment, so envy will consume a man."

Satan is out to report any disobedience to God as quickly as he can. But also remember this - obedience to God may also be reported. The specific charges brought against these three were:

- 1) They have disregarded you. 8:12a
- 2) They do not serve your gods. 8:12b
- 3) They do not worship the image. 8:12c

All three charges were true. These are true charges of faithfulness to God. This is a wonderful testimony for God.

**Daniel 3:13-18** – Nebuchadnezzar is irritated and insists that they worship the image.

Nebuchadnezzar was angry and demanded that the three be brought before him (**3:13**). He asked whether the report was true (**3:14**) and gave them another chance to respond (**3:15**).

What the three Jewish men know is that God could deliver them, but at this point these three do not know whether God will deliver them, but what they specifically do know is that it is idolatry to worship the image and they said we are not going to serve your gods or worship the image. Dr. C.I. Scofield said these three Jews are illustrative of the remnant of Jews who will stand faithful during the fires of the Tribulation.

These three would rather die than commit idolatry. They could have easily compromised and said God has given us our positions and our position requires that we do this. Time of hostile adversity may be times of tremendous opportunity.

However, you may be certain that if you purpose to live your life faithfully for God, you will be persecuted (II Timothy 3:12). At some point, you will be put to the test. Will you do what is right and stand for God? Will you go along with everyone else? These are pivotal moments in our faith. If in these crisis moments we purpose to do what is right - we discover that we will be led to great victory.

### **DANIEL 3:19-30**

This is one of the great, inspiring stories in Daniel and it does three things: 1) It encouraged Israel in Daniel's day; 2) It encourages us in our day; 3) It will encourage Israel in the Tribulation Day.

In Daniel chapter 3, we get our final look at three young, godly, Jewish men who took a remarkable stand for God and for righteousness. These young men were far away from home, and the “corrupting influences” of the Babylonian world could have lured them into doing what everyone else was doing. They could have blamed their compromise on their environment or even on religious and political pressure. The mandate to bow down and worship a golden image was something most young people would have done - but not these three. They stood for God! They honored God, and as a result, He honored them.

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE OBEY GOD AND STAY RIGHTEOUS IN THE FACE OF SEVERE THREATS AND INTIMIDATIONS, GOD WILL EVENTUALLY HONOR THEM AND REWARD THEM.**

If one takes a stand for God, there may be immediate negative results. However, in the long run, those who are faithful to God will be those who are honored by God. The Apostle Paul experienced the same kind of thing - II Timothy 4:16-17. He said there were times when the only one who stood with him and defended him was God.

**Daniel 3:19** – Nebuchadnezzar is very angry.

There can be little doubt that Nebuchadnezzar was a man who had a terrible temper problem. He had an explosive temper and that typically leads to actions which are emotional and irrational. We know that he had anger and rage when he first learned of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s refusal to bow (**3:13**) and now, when they reinforce their position by what they say to his face, the text says he was “filled with wrath.” As Bultema said, he was blind with rage. In fact, he was so mad that his face became distorted and he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times its normal heat.

The furnace was used for smelting ore - it had a large opening at the top and a door at the bottom to take metal out. According to Dr. Showers there was an incline plane that took one to the top of the furnace. Many have wondered what a furnace was doing out by a statue? More than likely it was used to build the statue. Gold would need to be melted as would other metals. Actually, if you want someone to suffer, you don’t heat the furnace so hot, for that would mean instant burning, but when people react with hot tempers, they typically don’t think things through logically.

Dr. John Walvoord said, “When a man gets full of fury, he gets full of folly.”

**Daniel 3:20** – Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the three Jews be cast into the furnace.

The fact that they would be tied up would negate any possibility of escape. But this was actually totally unnecessary because these three were not going to try to escape, they were going to trust in God.

**Daniel 3:21-22** – The military men bind the three Jews and throw them into the furnace.

Now there is a careful description given in **verse 21** as to what the three were wearing. They were tied up wearing their clothing, which would have been official clothing - perhaps some type of uniform. They were probably taken to an opening at the top of the furnace and thrown in.

The fire was so hot that it actually killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and threw them in. Three things guaranteed they would burn: 1) Flammable clothing; 2) Raging inferno; 3) Bound so tight so they could not move.

**Daniel 3:23-25** – Nebuchadnezzar witnesses the deliverance of the three Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar must have sat opposite of the bottom opening so he could peer in the fire. Now the first thing that Nebuchadnezzar saw was that his military men were killed but the three Jews weren't. The fire immediately killed those who carried Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (**3:22**), but it did not immediately kill them. In fact, they fell right into the middle of the fire still tied up (**3:23**).

When King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire, he saw five startling sights: 1) Four in the fire, not three; 2) No one was bound; 3) All were walking in the fire; 4) No one was hurt by the fire; 5) One like a god, or a son of the gods.

They were in the middle of the furnace walking as if they were in some park. As Dr. Wiersbe said - they were walking around like they were in some palace, not a furnace. Instead of writhing in pain, they are walking around as "cool as cucumbers." The fourth individual was what Nebuchadnezzar recognizes to be some form of Deity and it may have actually been a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ (theophany), for we know from N.T. doctrine that it is Jesus Christ who keeps one from burning in everlasting fire.

People have the greatest potential of seeing God in us when we are going through the fires of trouble.

**Daniel 3:26** – Nebuchadnezzar asks Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to come out of the fire.

Notice carefully that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that these three are "servants of the Most High God." Now this is the same concept of God that Nebuchadnezzar had when Daniel interpreted his dream.

**Daniel 3:27** – The leaders examine Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

These are some of the same people that brought charges against these three (**3:2-3**). These are all people who had bowed. They are now all eyewitnesses to the power and might of God. Now they are examining the three and they discover that the fire had no effect on these men. There were no blisters, no singed hair, no burnt clothing, no smell of smoke. The only thing that had been burned were the ropes that bound them. They passed through the fire without any negative effect whatsoever.

**Daniel 3:28-29** – Nebuchadnezzar praises God and demands others honor God.

There is no question God had done two amazing things for Nebuchadnezzar: 1) Revealed his dream through Daniel; 2) Revealed His protective power through Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

**Daniel 3:30** – Nebuchadnezzar promotes Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

God elevates those who are faithful to Him. No matter what the environment, no matter how evil the environment, God sees to it that His faithful people are honored. What we find in the Babylonian world are four key Jewish young men who are raised to the highest levels of political power. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego first showed up in chapter 1 as those taken captive (1:6-7). These three young men would not defile themselves in any way (1:8, 11). They were young men of prayer (2:17-18). They were young men of principle (**3:16**). When we see them one final time, they are men of position and prosperity (**3:30**). They risked everything for God and God honored them. They did not lose by their suffering, they gained.

What is the purpose of this miracle? To show Israel that her God is to be trusted and obeyed at all times, even when being dominated by a ruthless foreign power (Is. 43:1-2; Mt. 24:15). It is that same lesson we need too. God can be trusted by us when we are going through difficult, fiery times. If we remain faithful to God when suffering, we will end up a gainer and not a loser.





**STUDY QUESTIONS – LECTURE #4**  
**(Daniel 3:1-30)**

1. How much time transpires between chapters 2 and 3?

We don't actually know, but there was enough time for Nebuchadnezzar to forget God.

2. What conclusions may we draw about music from all of the instruments used in verse 5?

Music has the power to glorify God or to be used by Satan.

3. What were three factors that would guarantee Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would burn?

1) Inflammable clothing; 2) Raging fire; 3) Bound tight

4. When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire, what were five things he saw?

Four in fire; No one bound; All walking in fire; No one hurt; One like God

5. When the three were physically examined after coming out of the fire, what were four things they observed?

No blisters; No singed hair; No bound clothes; No smell of smoke