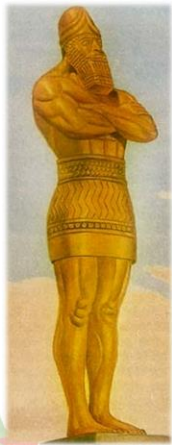


Daniel Chapter 3 portrays the feats for greatness of a fickle king, and a life-or-death test for the *remnant*, God's faithful people. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was given a prophetic vision of future events by God, showing a sweeping view of world history from his time until the end of the world. Shown the rise and fall of world empires including his own, Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar in defiance sought to rewrite future-history and God's revealed truths. Forgetting his boasts of the God of the Jews as the All-knowing Discerner of dreams, Nebuchadnezzar, by decree to set-up a golden statue on the plain of Dura, made a significant claim.



Q: Consider the metal that composed Nebuchadnezzar's entire statue. In light of recent Bible prophecies studied, what claim was Nebuchadnezzar seemingly making?

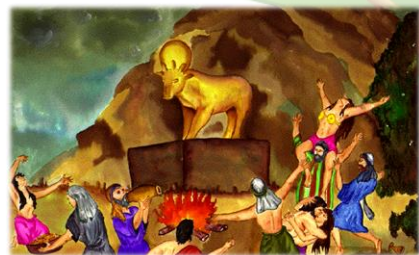
A: In defiance to the revelations and purposing of God, Nebuchadnezzar was asserting that Babylon, his kingdom of gold, would reign forever and would never fall to another (Daniel 2:37-45).

The set-up of the massive statue required weeks of preparation and planning. It can be assumed that the statue was in boastful pride for some great work or accomplishment of the king, or in honor of his gods. Historians however, also assert that the statue represented a test of loyalty towards the king and his regime after he

violently suppressed an attempted coup between the year 596B.C. and 595B.C by once, high-ranking officials within his court. Notice the king's command for the dedication of the golden statue involved great pomp and celebration for every person in the kingdom without exception!

Q: What was the role of music in the planned dedication ceremony for the golden image? Where else in the Bible is music used for sinful merrymaking?

A: Music was to set the atmosphere and *ignite* the festive worship of the golden image on the plain of Dura. Music was also used in the celebration of another golden image in the Bible, namely the golden-calf idol at the base of Mt. Sinai, created by the Children of Israel in rebellion towards God.



Miraculously delivered from the bondage of slavery by the outstretched arm of God, the Children of Israel revealed their persistent spiritual slavery in one of the greatest offenses to God, erecting an idol, the works of man's hands. To the golden calf, a lifeless form, they ascribed their successes and freedoms, versus the God of heaven and earth. Read Exodus 32:1-25, Isaiah 44:6-20, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11.

Consider the king of Babylon, the governmental head of the empire, made a command not only for adherence to his law but also for *worship*. Think of the religious freedoms you

enjoy today in your country. What would be your response if you were challenged by such a decree?

Compare the king's command to the following Bible verses:

- Exodus 20:2-6
- Acts 5:28, 29
- Acts 4:19, 20
- Romans 13:1-7
- 1 Peter 2:13-17
- Mark 12:13-17
- Matthew 10:28



Q: How would you summarize the counsels given in the Bible?

A: We are to worship God alone and no other. We are to respect civil authorities that God has established, and which He upholds on earth. However, when the laws and dictates of men cross, or contradict the commandments of God, God's commandments must be upheld.

The Bible here gives a glimpse of the abuses that can occur if the institutions of church and state become united. We shall see other examples of attempts to *codify morality* [make laws that control how a person thinks, behaves, and worships potentially against his or her will] in our continued studies of Bible prophecy.

Consider the combined efforts of the princes, governors, captains, and judges of Babylon, all of whom brought accusations against the three Hebrew-faithfuls.

Q: Why would these men unify against the three Hebrew

young men?

A: Envious of the authority granted to the Hebrew captives by the king, these native Babylonians sought every opportunity to subvert them.

Q: Consider the king's boastful threat when presenting his final offer to the youth to bow to the image: "... who [is] that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Who was the king actually challenging?



A: The arrogant king was challenging the Hebrew youth, but more so, the God of the Jews, the True and Living God.

Q: What was the three Hebrew faithfuls' position towards the king's threat of destroying them in the fire?

A: Independent of Daniel's influence, the three-youth *purposed* in their hearts not to break God's commandments and were willing to die rather than to sin. They believed that God was fully capable of saving their lives if He willed; but if not His will, they had resolved to die in the furnace.

Q: What gave the three Hebrew youth such faith in their God's ability to deliver? Consider the following verses: Romans 10:17; Isaiah 41:10, 43:2; Psalm 17:7, 34:7, 91:1-13, 105:1-45

A: The Hebrew youth remembered God's former deliverances towards Israel, written in Scripture. Further, the youth made practice of dying to self daily, surrendering

Daniel Chapter 3



fully to God and thus placing trust in Him and His promises. In times of test and trial God never removes all cause for doubt, yet, through His Word, the Bible, He has given more than sufficient reasons to believe and place trust in Him!

Enraged by the unyielding faith and determination of the three Hebrew young men who **purposed** to remain true to God under any circumstance, Nebuchadnezzar's pride and passion were checked, driving him to demand that the furnace be heated *seven times* hotter. The king summoned the most valiant men of his kingdom to bind the fully clothed, yielding Hebrew youth. As the youth were thrown to the floor of the furnace, the heat was such that *"the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego."* (v22).



Q: *What miracle did the king, his wise men, and his guards all notice within the furnace?*

A: *The king, his wise men, and his guards all noticed four men, not three, upright and walking about in the midst of the fiery furnace. The flames that killed those men who sought to harm the Hebrew youth, had no effect upon the youth.*

Q: *We understood that three Hebrew youth were bound and thrown into the furnace. Who do you perceive to have been*

the fourth man in the furnace?

A: *The **Angel of the Lord**, God Himself, was in the midst of the fire to protect the Hebrew youth! See Psalm 34:7; Exodus 3:1-6; Judges 13:5-23; Joshua 5:13-15; Rev 15:4*

Q: *The King said the fourth person in the furnace "is like the Son of God." How could he make such a statement?*

A: *It is evident that the Hebrew youth, as ambassadors for Christ, shared with Nebuchadnezzar God's **Everlasting Covenant** towards humankind. Shown God's character of love towards all men, the king could identify the fourth person as the **Son of God** (Ps 46:10; Mt 24:14; Jer 31:33, 34).*

Entirely unaffected by the flames, the three Hebrew youth were summoned out of the furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar.

Q: *Upon close examination by the princes, governors, captains, and judges of Babylon, what was noticed about the three Hebrew youth coming forth from the furnace?*

A: *"... the fire had no power [over them], nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" Daniel 3:27*

The unwavering faith of the youth inspired the blessing of deliverance from God (see Matthew 9:27-30), humbling the proud and boastful king. In shame, the king proclaimed, *"Blessed [be] the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God"* Daniel 3:28.

The victory of the Hebrew youth in the fiery furnace foreshadows the ultimate victory of the faithful over the *Second Death* by way of humankind's **Kinsman Redeemer**, Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:6, 10-15, 21:8). Consider there were other Jewish captives in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom who were subject to the king's **unrighteous decree** besides the three Hebrew youth. However, the three alone stood tall as God's **remnant!** Several object lessons are shown through the experience of the three Hebrew faithful, who are numbered among God's remnant people:

- God has shown that all will be tested, and two classes of people will emerge, namely: those who yield to the test, and those that overcome the test *by faith of Jesus Christ* (Daniel 12:10; 1 Peter 5:10; Hebrews 10:35-39)
- The remnant **purpose** in their hearts to be faithful to God in diet, in worship, even unto death (Revelation 12:11)
- While others yield under pressure, bowing to sin to save their lives, the remnant have learned to die-to-self daily, and are thus willing to lose their temporal life to gain eternal life (Matthew 10:32-39; Revelation 6:9-11)
- The faithfulness demonstrated by the **remnant** enables God to be glorified before the world (1 Kings 18:30-39)
- When we stand for God and His truths, though we may be few, we stand as the majority with the Lord (Rom 3:4)
- God can deliver us from any test or trial. It is amidst the hottest moments of our trials that we can be assured of Jesus' abiding presence (Exodus 33:14; Acts 7:55, 56)