

The Image of Gold

Daniel 3:1-18

By Scott Huckaby

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Daniel 2:24-49 Summary: Daniel reveals and explains King Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream.

What applications can be made to the here and now?

- Only God can declare the end from the beginning
- Today's geopolitical situation sets the stage for the coming iron & clay toe global government.

The Image of Gold, Daniel 3:1-7

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together 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 had set up. ³ 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. ⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ 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; ⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." ⁷ 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.

What did King Nebuchadnezzar do?

He had built a 90 foot high golden idol (6 cubits wide by 60 cubits high)

- The colossal size made it likely that the frame was wood overlaid with gold

What message was King Nebuchadnezzar sending with this statue?

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar deliberately made an entire statue of gold, to say that the day of his reign and authority would never end — in contradiction to God's declared plan.

Following Daniel's interpretation of his dream he had declared Daniel's God as God of gods and Lord of kings in Daniel 2:47... so, what happened?

Professed faith is not necessarily true conversion faith... he obviously defaulted back to his pagan ways.

- Head knowledge is not always heart knowledge.
- The Septuagint tells us this event took place some 18 years after Daniel's dream interpretation.

What might have motivated the King to set up this idol?

- His vaunted pride was self-deification and rebellion against the God of heaven
- He might have been seeking a unifying principle to weld together the diverse peoples of his kingdom into one great totalitarian government
- It was his attempt to institute a one world religion as was began at the Tower of Babel
- King Nebuchadnezzar's victory over the kingdom of Judah proved to him that his Babylonian god Marduk was superior to the God of the Jews

What was demanded of the people of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom at the dedication of the idol?

- A proclamation was made commanding all people to fall down prostrating themselves before the image upon hearing the musical signal
- This was more than a dedication – people were required to show allegiance to the king by worshiping his god
- Whatever gods they had previously worshiped, now they must worship this image

What was the penalty for not complying?

To be killed by being cast into a fiery furnace.

- The terror of that furnace caused most to disregard any insult it might cause to their own gods

Daniel's Friends Disobey the King, Daniel 3:8-18

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ 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; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; 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." ¹³ Then

Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? ¹⁵ 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?" ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ But if not, 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."

Who were these "certain Chaldeans" who snitched on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?

Probably the pagan wise men who still held a grudge that the Hebrews were able to win favor with the king.

How do you think Nebuchadnezzar handled the situation?

- He deserves some credit... he was willing to question the three Jews to verify and validate the report that they did not prostrate themselves on the ground. He did not just take the word of those making the report.
- He was willing to have the musicians play again giving them a second chance to comply thus forgiving their first offense
- However, the remark, "And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" was demeaning and meant to be a derogatory remark toward the God of the Jews

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego respond to the king's second chance?

They persisted in not serving any god but the Creator-God of Scripture.

- They did not plead their case of how wrong Nebuchadnezzar's requirement was
- They did not call the King a tyrant or an idolater
- They did not condemn or insult those who did bow down to the image
- They did not court martyrdom but said if they were called to die in the fiery furnace they would do so bravely because their cause was just

What reason did the three Hebrews have to hope that God would deliver them from the furnace?

- It would glorify God if He did deliver them in front of this vast audience – they would carry the miracle back home and spread the event far and wide!
- It would be a rebuke to the prideful and blasphemous Nebuchadnezzar who either supposed that the God they worshiped would not be able to deliver them or not be disposed to do so
- Perhaps they had in mind the prophetic promise of more than a century before...
Isaiah 43:2 – "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

How did the three Hebrews demonstrate courage?

The statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego was remarkable for what it does not have — any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this it is easy to think of a thousand excuses that seem to justify compromise...

Why didn't they think, "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?

Why didn't they think, "We are in a different place; when in Rome, why not do as the Romans do?"

They knew that God has unlimited jurisdiction. We must do more than "perform" acts of religious obedience when we have an audience.

Why didn't they think, "After all, we are not being called to renounce our God, are we?"

They did not have a super-elastic 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."

- Excuses like this are common but prove the principle that anything will serve as an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise.

Why didn't they think, "Why not, everybody else is doing it?"

Instead, they cultivated brave personalities, willing to stand alone with God.

Why didn't they think, "It is only for once, and not for very long. Ten minutes, just for the king. Isn't it stupid to throw our lives away for ten minutes?"

These men knew that ten minutes could change an entire life. Ten minutes can chart the course for your eternity.

Why didn't they think, "This is more than can be expected of us; won't God will understand?"

It is true that God understands our struggle with sin — that is why He loves us and made provision at the cross for freedom from the penalty of sin.

- Knowing that "God understands" should be a spur to obedience, not a license to sin.

What gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego such confidence in God?

- They had seen Him work miracles in the past... Daniel's dream interpretation.
- They did not question His ability to save them
- They believed He would do what He thought was best in this case
- They committed the whole situation into His hands (v18) ...If they live or die, it is God's call!

What is the principle here that may be applied to us today and, in particular, Israel during the Tribulation?

God honors those who honor Him with their courage...

The refusal of the three Hebrew men to bow down and worship the image and their deliverance is seen as a type of the way God will preserve the believing children of Israel during the seven-year Tribulation, when they refuse to worship the image of the Antichrist.

What principles are seen by seeing the fiery furnace as a type of the Tribulation?

There will be great affliction for the Jews and new Christian believers during the Tribulation Period

- The three Hebrew men are a type of Israel, who will be preserved through the Tribulation Period
- Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the Antichrist. He is trying to force believers to bow down to his own image and worship him (indirectly worshiping Satan).
- Daniel is a type of the Church taken away at the rapture. He is not present during all this activity

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- Professed faith is not necessarily true conversion faith; head knowledge is not always heart knowledge.
- Courage comes from knowing God.
- Making excuses for disobeying God is what pagans do.