

- I) V1-7 INTRO: Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was sixty
- II) This chapter contains an account of three of Daniel's friends
We were introduced to them in ch 1 as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah
They are remembered by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshech and Abed Nego
- III) These three young men were companions of Daniel
Ch 1 tells us that they were part of the nobility of Israel
When Babylon began taking captives, they were among the first to be taken to Babylon
- IV) They were not much more than boys when they were taken to Babylon
When taken, they were around 15-20 years of age
- V) As for their *appearance* and *intellect*, they were outstanding in every way
They had no blemish: They had no exterior physical or moral stain
Good looking: Attractive to view, handsome
Gifted in all wisdom: They were superior in understanding, perceptive; skilled, prudent
Possessed knowledge: They were trained and had educational experience
Quick to understand: Able to be taught, bright; sharp minded; a quick learner
- VI) As we saw, Nebuchadnezzar wanted to make them forget their Jewish culture
He put them into a three year training period to make them Babylonians
They learned the Babylonian language and were schooled in Babylonian literature
His intent was to convert them from being Jewish
- VII) They were young boys, over 900 miles away from home
They were immersed in a new culture, food, way of dressing, and different customs
- VIII) He also poured into them the religious beliefs of the Babylonians
This was an attempt to cause them to forget the God of Israel and become Babylonians
- IX) They had delicacies, vintage wine and a three year educational scholarship
They are young, impressionable and at the mercy of the greatest king on earth

X) They were in a city of incredible power and majesty, beyond anything they had ever seen

The hanging gardens, temples, parks, and military were amazing

XI) Imagine what an impressionable teen aged boy would think when he was offered this

To be part of such an incredible empire would be a staggering temptation

XII) It is the kind of temptation that could draw away someone from their faith in God

I) When Jesus was being tempted, one of the temptations was for power

Mt 4:8-10 Again the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him, Away with you Satan! For it is written You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve!

II) This kind of temptation was offered to these young men

What is it that helped them to deal with it?

III) The first clue is found in their given names

Hananiah: Jehovah is Gracious

Mishael: Who is He that is God?

Azariah: Jehovah has helped

IV) They were trained by godly parents

Though Judah had sunk into idolatry and disobedience, these parents had not

V) Even in the time of Israel's growing unbelief, their parents trained them in God's ways

Pr 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Eph 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

VI) As we already saw, these young men held fast to their faith in the One God

When Nebuchadnezzar had troubling dreams, he had demanded an interpretation

None of his counselors could provide one, and he began to arrest them

VII) Daniel and these young men went *into prayer*, and sought help from God
They had not become Babylonians, but had stood firm in their faith in the True God

VIII) They sought mercy from God, that they might not perish with the others
God answered their prayers, they were spared, and they were given high positions

Though holding high political positions, they had not compromised their faith

IX) Ch 3 is the last time that we will see these young men
Until this day they remain models of godly men who hold tightly to their convictions
These were men who remained strong, *literally* revealing Courage Under Fire

X) Ch 3 begins with the king's reaction to the events of ch 2: it may be 20 years later

XI) In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he dreamed about a huge image, in the form of a man

I) It was an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits (90 feet) and 9 feet wide
It might have been shaped like one of our national monuments

II) In Daniel's interpretation he had told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold

In response to this, Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a giant golden image

Apparently the king set out to build a statue that visibly represented him

III) More than likely he desired to use the statue to draw people to recognize his divine power

To compel people to worship this image would then be recognition of his personal glory

It would seem that he didn't accept that he would have such glory temporarily

IV) One last thing: The word image is used 11 times in this chapter

This would emphasize the reason the men did not worship
Ex 20:3-5a You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not
make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven
above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the
earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them...

V) V1 The king made an image of gold whose height was 60 cubits and its width 6
cubits

These kinds of images were not unusual at this time
The Colossus on the Greek island of Rhodes was 105' high
3 images were found on top of the Belus temple in Babylon, one of
which was 60' high

VI) The image was more than likely made of wood and covered with gold plates
This was a common practice at the time
Is 40:19 The workman molds a graven image, the goldsmith
overspreads it *with gold*, and the silversmith casts silver chains

VII) LOCATION: He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon
Conservative scholars places the location approximately 6 miles S.E. of
Babylon

VIII) This statue in Babylon reminds the reader of the tower of Babylon
This tower was intended to unify the existing nations on earth

IX) V2-3 King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the
administrators

This represented national solidarity, as they represent his entire
kingdom

They represented to leaders and influencers in his kingdom

X) This would be calling together the major branches of government
For us it would be including the legislative (the house and Senate) and
the Judiciary

It included various other governmental executives

I) Satraps: Princes, chief government officials; administrators

Administrators: Military chieftains

Governors: Civil government officials

Counselors: Chief arbitrators, counselors

Treasurers: Keepers of the public treasury

Judges: Law officials, guardians of civil law

Magistrates: Judges in its strictest sense

Officials of the provinces:

II) V4-7 Then a herald cried aloud: To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and

These were representatives of all the nations under subjection to Babylon

III) You must fall down and worship the gold image: (A symbol of Babylon as world power)

IV) By bowing down in worship to this image a two-fold purpose is revealed
FIRST: They are giving respect and praise to the gods of Babylon
(Religious)

SECOND: They are honoring the values of the nation (Political)

V) KEY: Nebuchadnezzar wasn't demanding people to not worship their own gods
This they were free to continue to do
By worshiping his image they were admitting that he and his gods were greater

VI) A refusal to worship would be regarded as hostility to the king and his religion
This is something he would not tolerate

VII) V6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst

What if they said: I don't feel like worshiping today

VIII) Obviously, even in our day government may intrude on the free expression of religion

Many saw the forbidding of gathering or singing as intrusions on their right to worship

IX) In the Acts ch 5, the apostles were arrested by religious officials and jailed
An angel opened the prison doors and told them to speak all the words of this life

X) The religious leaders heard of this and strictly commanded them not to teach
Ac 5:29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said We ought to obey God rather than men

XI) Today, we are pilgrims living in a land that is not our home
1 Pe 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as *foreigners* and *exiles*, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

I) When we are given the choice of worshiping God or something else, we must choose

II) V8-12 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews

These were the priestly class of court astrologers
They resented another race ruling over them and were rivals for their positions

III) They were angered and offended at the Jews rejecting the orders
They did not like the fact that they would not bow to their religion and rules

IV) When everyone else was bowing down, these three Jewish men remained standing
They did not draw attention to themselves, and made no loud outburst or protest
They respectfully remained standing, while all others bowed

V) Their allegiance and worship was reserved for their God, and their love for their country

VI) They came with their (malicious) accusation against the Jews (anti-Semitic)
They began politely and then immediately went for the kill

VII) V12 Notice: *You have set:* They subtly place the blame on Nebuchadnezzar
Three-fold charge:
They've dishonored you, don't serve your gods, and won't worship the image

VIII) THESE MEN: Were men of conscience
They obeyed a higher rule in their life: They worshiped God according to His Word
They would not worship this image, because what you worship you will serve
Dt 6:13 Fear the LORD your God, (and) serve him only

IX) V13-14 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and fury gave the command to bring Shadrach

X) Nebuchadnezzar had absolute authority and was merciless when opposed
He already had shown his temperament when he arrested the wise men of Babylon

He said he would cut them in pieces and make their homes into an ash heap

XI) He was not open to being disobeyed

Pr 16:14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death, but a wise man will appease it.

Pr 20:2 A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion; he who angers him forfeits his life

XII) V15 And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands

He has forgotten Who was responsible for the interpretation of his dream (2:47)

He believes he has supreme power and does not believe the God of Israel will interfere with him

I) This reminds me of Pharaoh when Moses told him to let Israel go

Ex 5:2 Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.

II) V15 And who is the god who will deliver you from my hand

Your God may be able to give interpretations for dreams, but He won't save you now!

III) V16-18 Shadrach Meshach and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king

They knew that he was not open to hearing their reason for not bowing to the idol

IV) We see this attitude in full expression today

To attempt to reason with some people is simply impossible

They are not open to discussion, but only in shutting discussion down

V) For them, arguing their point was fruitless: It boiled down to honoring their God

VI) Sometimes an argument is simply not necessary or worthwhile

Pr 20:3 It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.

VII) They drew a line in the sand: they knew who they served and they knew who they feared

VIII) They also knew that faith in God could result in physical harm to them

This is where Christians sometimes get confused:

- IX) Our faith in Jesus does not mean that we won't endure afflictions
 Sometimes the road to faith is lined with troubles
 Ps 71:20 Though You have shown me many troubles and misfortunes,
 You will revive me once again. Even from the depths of the earth You will bring me
 back up.
- X) Jesus made this clear when preparing His disciples to follow Him
 Mt 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
 But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- XI) V17-18 If that is the case our God whom we serve *is able* to deliver us
- XII) Our God has supreme power and therefore has the ability to deliver us
 The moral implication: Our God is good; we worship a loving good God
- XIII) V17 And He will deliver us
 By life or by death, He will deliver us one way or another
 We know that martyrdom is a possibility, and we are willing to die for
 our faith in Him
- I) Nebuchadnezzar had asked Who is the God who will deliver you from my
 hands
 These young men were pleased to tell him
 The God whom we serve is able, and we will not bow to your gods
- II) V19-23 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face
 changed
 He is so angry that he actually reduces their punishment by heating the
 furnace
 This was intended to make them more tense as they await their doom
- III) V20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army
 There was an opening at the top of a furnace, and one at its base
 He commanded his special forces to give up their lives for him
- IV) Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors were at the base of the furnace
 He expected to see the three men cremated instantly
- V) V24-25 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and
 spoke
 There is a fourth person in there: He is a god
- VI) This is what is called a Christophany: a preincarnate appearance of the Son of
 God

Is 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Is 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.

VII) The three men are free, walking about and making no attempt to come out

VIII) V26-30 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke

He immediately recognizes their God is indeed the greatest God

IX) V28 What is it that impressed him? They yielded their bodies refusing to compromise

Ro 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Ro 14:7-8 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's

X) V29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks

Obviously this is something that he can't really control: it is simply a strong statement

This gives them permission to fully worship their God, without penalty

I) V30 Then the king promoted Shadrach Meshach and Abed Nego in the province. Ultimately, they were given promotions and now had his special favor

II) THE KEY TO GREATNESS:

Ac 20:22-24 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry, which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

