

Daniel 3

“Protected In the Fire”

SA221218

1. If you remember last week, we saw God give Daniel the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's disturbing dream.
 - **And** in that dream God revealed that the image represented the remaining 4 world kingdoms until the return of Christ.
2. The head of gold represented Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar.
3. The chest and arms of silver represented the Medes and the Persians or the Medo-Persian Empire that came next.
4. The belly and thighs of bronze represented the Greek Empire, which would follow the Medo-Persian Empire.
5. **And** lastly, the legs of iron with the feet and toes of iron and clay represented the final kingdom.
 - Which we know was the Roman Empire in two time periods: the first one 2000 years ago and then the revived Roman Empire in the last days which will be just before the Lord's 2nd Coming.

To get the timeline, the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, tells us that this particular episode occurred about 20 years after Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon.

- **Hence** this is about 17 years after Daniel chapter 2.

v.1 1. Wait a minute! In his dream he was just the head and now he is the entire image!

- **We** see Nebuchadnezzar's problem is Pride.

2. He let the position GOD gave him go to his "head" so to speak!

- **Who** cares what God says, this is what **"I"** want!

3. And in this we will see that this part of Nebuchadnezzar's life is a picture of the coming anti-Christ.

- **That is**, just like Nebuchadnezzar does here, Revelation says the anti-Christ will set up an image on the Temple Mount and try to change what God's Word says will happen in the last days.

4. Daniel 7:25 says that the anti-Christ will "speak great words against the Most High and shall wear out the saints of the Most High thinking to change times and laws."

- **In** other words, what God has said will happen will indeed happen but the anti-Christ will try to change it to show that **he** is God.
5. Remember, in Daniel 1:21 Daniel states that God alone controls the “times and seasons.”
- **Although** Nebuchadnezzar knew what God’s Word said about his kingdom, he did his best to change it.
6. I find the dimensions of the image he builds very interesting. They seem to have a spiritual meaning.
- **It** was 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits at its base, and there were 6 “types” of instruments and music played when it was to be worshipped.
 - **666**
7. In addition, it was 90 ft. tall and 9 ft. wide at the base. Nine is the number of the occult in Scripture.
- **So** it is interesting to see the specific numbers associated with this image as those representing the anti-Christ and the occult.

v.3 I suspect we will see something very similar when the image of the anti-Christ is unveiled on the Temple Mount some time in the near future.

- v.6
1. First notice it was a command.
 - **With** Nebuchadnezzar sitting as a Monarch this was “mandated.” You had to obey or else.
 - **Not** good!
 2. Remember, a major sign of the enemy is the removal of choice because he is a dictator and wants total control.
 - **Hence** he puts forth a “mandate” that all have to obey.
 3. He says that whoever does not fall down and worship this image he has made will be cast into a fiery furnace.
 - He was forcing, by mandate, everyone to worship HIM or die.
 - **Which** is exactly what the anti-Christ will do when he unveils his image on the Temple Mount!
 4. The second thing I want to point out here is that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had no idea Nebuchadnezzar was going to demand this until it happened.
 - **But** as we noted last week, we must be **READY BEFORE** the test comes or we will **NOT** be ready when it does.

v.8 1. Notice two things here.

- **There** were “certain” Chaldeans accusing “certain” Jews.
- **And** there will always be those who take a more aggressive stand against those who take a stand for God.
- **Especially** if it is a Jew!

v.12 1. Notice they are attacking these “certain” Jews who had been set over the province and were not bowing down.

- **Which** tells us several things.

2. First, this means there were “other” Jews who **WERE** bowing down!

- **How** wonderful when believers take a stand to not bow or give in to the sins of the world, but how sad when they do.
- **Let** us be those who decide beforehand to make a stand like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!

3. Second, we can assume that there was probably some embarrassment for Nebuchadnezzar that his own officials were disobeying.

- **And** there may have been some jealousy going on here as well among some hoping to take advantage of the situation and maybe take their position.

- **Which** is interesting in light of what Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had done for many of these men just a few years ago.

4. If you remember, it was only a few years earlier that Daniel and his friends had saved the lives of the wise men by revealing Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

- **Yet** now we see no appreciation or thankfulness whatsoever.
- **The** point is no matter what kindness you show to an unbeliever, they might still turn on you at their first opportunity.

v.13 1. Again, this is not a guy you want mad at you!

- **And** why did he get so mad at this?
- **Because** of his pride and the fact that they didn't obey him.

v.15 1. This is where everything changes and where Nebuchadnezzar makes his big mistake.

- **You** see, it's just like when Sennacherib challenged God and Hezekiah had confidence to bring it boldly to the Lord!
- **And** this is when we as believers can feel the most confident!

2. And this is the moment of truth for these believers.

- **Will** they make a stand or give in?

3. What would we do?

- **That** will depend on whether we have decided beforehand AND whether we are being filled daily with the Holy Spirit for power.

4. And the only way we can be sure of what we will do in a situation like this is to first be filled with the Holy Spirit each day.

- **But** second, we must “die” before we are asked to die.

5. What do I mean?

- **If** we die to ourselves and consider ourselves “already dead” to this world, then when we face the possibility of physical death, we will be ready.

6. This is one reason why Paul was so successful in his boldness and witness in the face of such dangerous opposition.

- **He** saw himself as already dead, hence physical death didn’t scare him or stop him.

7. But them standing before the King brings up an issue of Romans 13 and the command to obey our governing authorities.

- **We** are NOT commanded to obey when they ask us to go against the Word of God or against our conscience before God.
- **Which** is exactly what was happening here.

8. And brings up a very important point for where we are in our day and age.

- **We** are never to obey any law or mandate from our workplace or the government that tells us to go against God's Word **OR** the convictions of our conscience.

v.18 1. This took courage and boldness and as we noted earlier.

- **But** notice how they responded.

2. First, they were respectful to their authority but drew a line in the sand when it came to God.

- **And** it is important to note that when making a stand for Scripture or our conscience, we need to be respectful regardless of how we are treated.

3. Next, notice they told Nebuchadnezzar that God **WAS** able to save them, but even if He didn't they would not bow to his god.

- **And** this is the "understanding and balance" we all need in such situations.

4. First, we need to fully know and believe that that God CAN deliver us from any difficult trial or situation, but ultimately know that is up to Him if He will or not.

- **No** matter how strong our faith is, we have to understand that God does not always save us from persecution or even death.
 - **We** have seen this throughout history.
5. But next, we need to understand that even if He doesn't deliver us, this doesn't mean He is unable or unfaithful.
- **Only** that He knows what is best for us and for HIS glory in the situation.
6. And this is what they are saying here.
- **The** ultimate decision is always left up to God because HE is God!

v.23 1. What an amazing scene!

- **Nebuchadnezzar** gets so furious that he has them make the fire 7 times hotter than normal as he prepares to burn them alive!
2. We don't know why there was even a furnace there, but it may have been connected to the worship of this false god.
- **We** see they are now quite literally facing a fiery trial.
3. But there was a "purpose" in even this.
- **1st Peter 4:12** says, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of

Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

- **Fiery trials** are sent purify us, set us free in areas of bondage, and make us more like Jesus.

4. Notice they were "bound" when they went into the fire, but "loose" by the time they came out.

- **The** very fire and trial they no doubt feared was the very thing that burned off the ropes of bondage and set them free.
- **And** many of you in here have that same testimony.

5. You were "bound" in some sin or situation until a fiery trial came along.

- **And** while it was no fun at the time, it was the very fire of that trial that set you free.

6. That is the only thing the fire did was burn off the ropes with no other consequences!

- **But** at the time, they no doubt felt this was their end.

v.25 1. Nebuchadnezzar now sees them loose and walking around in the midst of the fire with no harm!

- **And** notice he sees a 4th man LIKE the Son of God with them because it WAS the Son of God!

- **He** obviously stood out and looked different in the fire than they did.

2. This is what scholars call a “Christophany” and it is where we see Jesus among men before He “officially” came as a man to walk the earth.

- **And** this brings us to another great truth when it comes to fiery trials in our life: **God** never promises to deliver us **FROM** the fire, but He promises to be with us **IN** the fire.

v.27 1. What a testimony it is to the unbeliever to see how Christians react when in the midst of the fire.

- **Those** around them recognized Who their God was: **The “Most High God”**
- It caused them to see they were different.
- **This** is called an open door!

2. Not only did they come out of the fire alive, but their hair was not singed; they didn’t even smell like smoke!

- **When** they made a stand for God, He not only protected them spiritually but also physically from any consequences!

v.29 1. And notice the first result of their witness.

- **Even** unbelievers are praising the true God for what He has done!

- **And** this is often the result of us simply making a stand for God and watching Him work in the midst of it.
2. The second result of their witness was that it gave protection for others who might want to make a stand as well.
- **Their** stand resulted in Nebuchadnezzar giving a command that no one could go against the God of the Jews.
 - **Which** means their stand and boldness made it safe for others to do the same.

v.30 They now get their second promotion in the kingdom!

- **Although** you may be persecuted for your stand in the Lord at home or work, it might just lead to blessing by the time God is done.

But as we finish today, I want to note the similarities between Nebuchadnezzar as a picture of the anti-Christ as compared to the actual anti-Christ.

1. First, he makes an image representing himself and his kingdom; it was all gold just as he was the “head of gold” to be worshipped.

- Revelation says the anti-Christ will make an image of himself to be worshipped on the Temple Mount.
2. Second, even as Nebuchadnezzar forced a one-world religion through the worship of the image, the book of Revelation says there will be another one-world religion enforced by the anti-Christ during that final 7 years.
 3. Third, Nebuchadnezzar turns up the heat 7 times hotter against the Jews in order to persecute, them but God still protects them.
 - **So too** the anti-Christ will “turn up the heat” against the Jews in the worst Jewish persecution in world history, but God will supernaturally protect those who flee to Petra.
 4. And lastly, did you ever wonder where Daniel is during this whole episode?
 - **Most** scholars believe he was out of town on official business, but the point is that he was gone during this “time of tribulation.”
 5. And I believe that Daniel is a picture of the believers in the last days, those who will be missing during this last 7-year period due to the rapture.
 6. Let me finish by asking are YOU in a fiery trial today?

- **If** so, you need to know that no matter how bad it seems right now God **WILL** be faithful.
- **And** He will not only be with you in the fire, but He will also bring you out on the other side unscathed.