

## The Book of Daniel

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Nebuchadnezzar's Idol

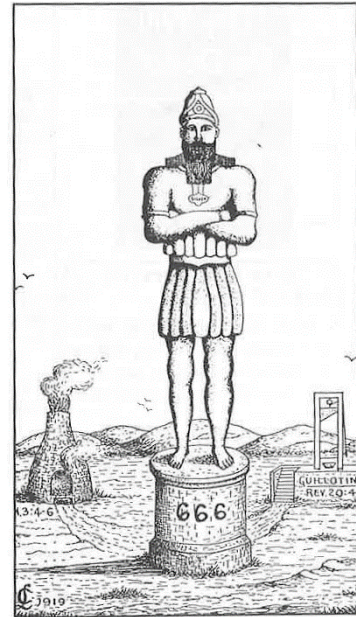
While Daniel chapter three has a close resemblance to chapter two, there is a time gap between these two chapters. The exact amount time between these two chapters varies between commentators, but most agree it's around eighteen to twenty-three years. That can be seen by the following: **first**, it would seem strange for Nebuchadnezzar to erect an image of pure gold in this chapter after acknowledging the greatness of God in the previous chapter (2:47), and **secondly**, for Nebuchadnezzar to make the entire image of gold would seem to indicate defiance to the revelation given in chapter two. This would be highly unlikely, given Nebuchadnezzar's response to the interpretation of his dream, for he declared, "... **Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, ...**" (Daniel 2:47). It would be more probable that the image was erected some time after the fall of Jerusalem (B.C. 587) when Nebuchadazzar, in his pride of conquest, remembered Daniel's revelation, and in obstinate pride made the image entirely of gold, to defy the revelation of the coming kingdoms and the end to his. **Thirdly**, Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter, which would seem strange without a time lapse between the two chapters, for in chapter two Daniel was made "**ruler over the whole province of Babylon**" (vs. 48). **Fourthly**, the image Nebuchadnezzar erected was placed in Dura, in the province of Babylon (3:1), a province Daniel presided over. It is highly improbable Daniel would not have influenced the king to show restraint in creating the image, much less having all the leaders of his kingdom bow before it. Therefore, with the passing of time between these two chapters, we see Daniel's influence over King Nebuchadnezzar has now all but diminished.

**Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. (Daniel 3:1)**

**The Image in the Land of Dura (vs. 1):** I believe the image is of Nebuchadnezzar himself, for he was the head of gold (2:38). Even though Nebuchadnezzar was only the head of gold in the dream, he covers the entire image in gold, showing his defiance and desire to rule over all the earth's empires (4:28-30). The image is sixty cubits high and six cubits

wide (18" for a cubit would be 90 feet high by 9 feet wide). It would be probable that the image was placed on a pedestal making it more equal proportions for the actual image.

This image and the events surrounding the image are a picture of future events and worth noting. **First**, there is the number associated with the image. The image is 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide and there are 6 instruments of music used in its call to worship. Thus, the number 666 is associated with this great image. In numerology six is the number of a man<sup>1</sup>, and is associated with the number of the coming world leader, being a "superman" who has the number 666. **Secondly**, the command by Nebuchadnezzar to worship the image of himself foreshadows a time when all will be called to "worship the image of the Beast." **Thirdly**, all those that would not worship the image setup by Nebuchadnezzar would be killed, just as those who do not worship the image of the Beast will be killed in the future. **(Revelation 13:15-18)**.



This image of Nebuchadnezzar overlaid in gold is the deification of him, making a god of ruling man. Throughout history, people have built many monuments to men, statues of those both good and bad. Saddam Hussein regarded himself as a reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar. He rebuilt portions of ancient Babylon in Iraq, even restoring the



famed Ishtar Gate and erecting a statue of himself in Bagdad. However, on April 9, 2003 U.S. forces toppled his statue in downtown Baghdad. All kingdoms of men will fall and be crushed by the rock cut without hands, God's Kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar's image is placed in the province of Babylon in the land of Dura. Archaeologists have discovered a brick pedestal just six miles south of the site of ancient Babylon, in a place called Tolul Dura ("mounds of Dura"). The pedestal ruin is forty-five feet square and twenty feet high. The French archaeologist who discovered it, Julius

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<sup>1</sup> Man was created on the sixth day, six is the average height of man, and when you die, they bury you six feet deep. The book of Romans, the sixth book of the New Testament which has the word "man" in it (Ro-mans), tells us how to get out of the "old man" Adam and get into the "new man" Christ. And in the sixth chapter of Romans, the sixth word in the sixth verse is "man." Therefore, the coming superman's number will be 666.

Oppert, believed that it was the base of the image described in Daniel chapter three. Regardless of this, scripture tells us the image was erected in the province of Babylon.

**Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (Daniel 3:2-3)**

**Dedication of the Great Image (vss. 2-3):**

Nebuchadnezzar gathered together all the leadership from across the province of Babylon: princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and all the rulers. This list would have included Daniel and his three friends. While Daniel is not mentioned, his three friends are, for at Daniel's request, they had been promoted over all the affairs of the king (2:49 cf. vs. 12). We are not told the reason



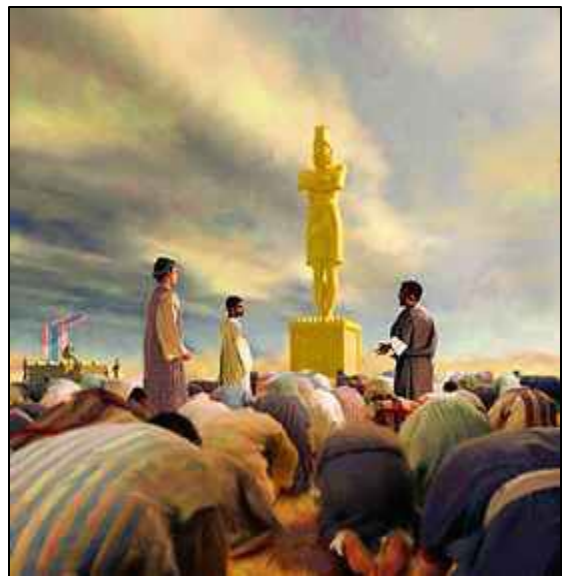
for Daniel's absence from this chapter, however it does lend itself as evidence to the time gap between chapters two and three.

**Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. (Daniel 3:4-7)**

**The Call to Worship (vss. 4-7):** Nebuchadnezzar calls forth a “herald<sup>2</sup>” to proclaim to the crowd. The herald “cried aloud” the command of the king to all the delegates from the whole realm of Babylon. The command was that at the time they heard the musical instruments play, they were to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had setup (vs. 5). Then he proclaimed the warning that whoever did not fall down and worship before the image would be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace (vs. 7).

It would seem that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and all those who were invited to this dedication did not know that it would turn from a dedication ceremony into a worship service for the image until the “herald” came out and proclaimed the commandment from the king. This would explain why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in attendance of this royal ceremony and arrayed in royal apparel (see vs. 21).

**Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:8-12)**



**The Three Men Accused (vss. 8-12):** Notice some things in these verses. **First**, remember Daniel (not mentioned in this chapter), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were the only Jews in captivity who were given positions of leadership and authority. Being that this dedication was held only for those in leadership across Nebuchadnezzar’s realm, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have been the only Jews in attendance. This

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<sup>2</sup> A proclaimer; a publisher; as the herald of another's fame.

distinction was glaring to the crowd when they would not fall down and worship the image. **Secondly**, the fact of their being the only Jews in leadership caused the Chaldeans to not only charge Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before the king, but also to declare that they had “not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (**vs. 12**). The Chaldeans’ wording is that of spite. **Thirdly**, notice that these “Chaldeans” were the very group that were spared from certain death upon Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, for God gave the interpretation to Daniel to spare them (**2:30**). How quickly we forget the kindness of others.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would hold to their command to worship only the one true and living God, being faithful to the Law of God (**Exodus 20:4, 5**).

**Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? (Daniel 3:13-15)**

**The Second Chance (vss. 13-15):** Nebuchadnezzar’s rage and fury is nothing new; we have seen this before in his haste to kill all the wise men (**2:12**). However, even in the king’s rage, he extended to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego the benefit of the doubt and offered another chance to live (**vs. 14-15**). Nebuchadnezzar reminds them of their punishment for refusal to obey his command, and states “**who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**” What a change of heart in the king from years ago when he stated, “**Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret**” (**Daniel 2:47**).

**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:16-18)**

**The Responds to the King's Offer (vss. 16-18):** The response from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is one of calm, thoughtful faith. They did not speak out of haste, for they understood perfectly what was at stake. Their response was one of faith in God, regardless of the cost. They were resolved in the living God, knowing that even if He did not come to their aid and deliver them, they were not willing to bow before the king's image. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego never questioned God's ability, but rather what God's will was for them. They were not willing to compromise, they lived in Babylon but refused to be Babylonians.

**Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:19-23)**

**The Fury of the King (vss. 19-23):** The dedication ceremony was over, at least for the king, for upon the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to accept his "gracious" offer, the king welled up, full of fury, so much so the "form of his visage<sup>3</sup> was changed." He turned into a madman (vs. 19). Nebuchadnezzar's insane fury drives him to command the furnace be heated seven times hotter, and this resulted in his own men, mighty men of his army, being burned (vs. 22). This only adds to the miracles surrounding this event, for it shows just how intense the heat of the furnace was. At the king's commandment, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound straightway. They were still wearing their special, celebrational clothing, showing the king's haste as they fell into the burning, fiery furnace (vs. 21).

**Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They**

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<sup>3</sup> Visage is a reference to the face, as in Isaiah 52:14 and Lamentations 4:8

answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:24-25)



**The Fourth Man in the Fiery Furnace (vss. 24-25):** Sitting a safe distance away and supposing to take pleasure in oversight of his firm retribution against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,

Nebuchadnezzar looks into the flames in **“astonishment”** and gets up **“in haste.”** He asks his councilors **“did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”** to which they reply, **“True, O king” (vs. 24).** But the king did not see the burning bodies of three Hebrews, but four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, who were not hurt, and he said the form of the fourth looked like the Son of God (vs. 25).

There are a host of miraculous details worth noting in this account apart from the obvious fact that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not burning in the flames. **First**, notice the men are not bound, they are **“loosed.”** They did fall bound in the flames, but the flames burned only their bonds. **Secondly**, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s clothing was not scorched, not even a hair on their heads were singed, neither was the smell of smoke found on them: **“... upon whose bodies the fire had no power, 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).** **Thirdly**, notice the fourth man in the flames. This fourth man is mentioned as being, **“like the Son of God” (vs. 25).** I am convinced this is none other than Jesus Christ; it is a Christophany, a preincarnation appearance of Jesus Christ. Jesus appeared before Joshua in **Joshua 5:13-15 (cf. Acts 7:45)**, and just as most versions change **Acts 7:45** to mask Jesus being the Angel of the Lord, so they change Daniel 3:25 to mask Jesus being like **“the Son of God.”** Most versions change Daniel 3:25 to read **“the fourth is like a son of the gods” (ASV).** **Fourthly**, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego picture the Tribulation saints who will be delivered through the fire of God’s judgment at the second advent, as is foretold by Isaiah **“... When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2).** God will preserve His Remnant. The world that was judged by water, will be judged by fire (**2 Peter 3:6-7**), and just as Noah and his family were saved through the waters, so the believing remnant

will be saved through the fires of God's wrath (**Matthew 3:12; Isaiah 33:14-17; Luke 21:36**).

**Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. (Daniel 3:26-27)**

**The Kings Request (vss. 26-27):** Upon seeing the four men walking around in the flames, Nebuchadnezzar calls forth Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a most unusual way. He calls them **"servants of the Most High God"** (**vs. 26**). I see this as a testament to the fourth Man in the flames being Jesus, the Son of the Most High God (**Mark 5:7**).

At the king's request Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the midst of the fire, and to everyone's amazement, the fire had no power over them. The men were not burned, not a hair of their head was singed, their coats weren't changed and there was no smell of fire on them (**vs. 27**).

**Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, 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. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon. (Daniel 3:28-30)**

**The Promotion (vss. 28-30):** Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation is not an acknowledgment of God as the one true God. In "blessing" the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar is stating that the God of these Hebrew men is a God *among* other gods, and the people in his kingdom are to acknowledge this powerful God (**vss. 28, 29**).

Nebuchadnezzar identifies the fourth Man in the furnace as an "angel." This is his interpretation of things; the fourth person looked like the the Son of God, so it must have



been an angel from God, sent to deliver His servants that trusted in Him. Their God was powerful enough to have “changed the king’s word” and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the fire (vs. 28).

It is said of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that they **“yielded their bodies that they might not service nor worship any god, except their own God”** (vs. 28). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are an example of Romans 6:13, **“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”**

Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon (vs. 30), and he makes a decree of punishment for those who blaspheme the Hebrew God: if any speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego they would be cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill. This is the same threat he made to the wise men who could not interpret his dream in the previous chapter (cf. 2:5).