

Daniel 3 (TAC)

Tuesday, July 7, 2026

1:45 PM



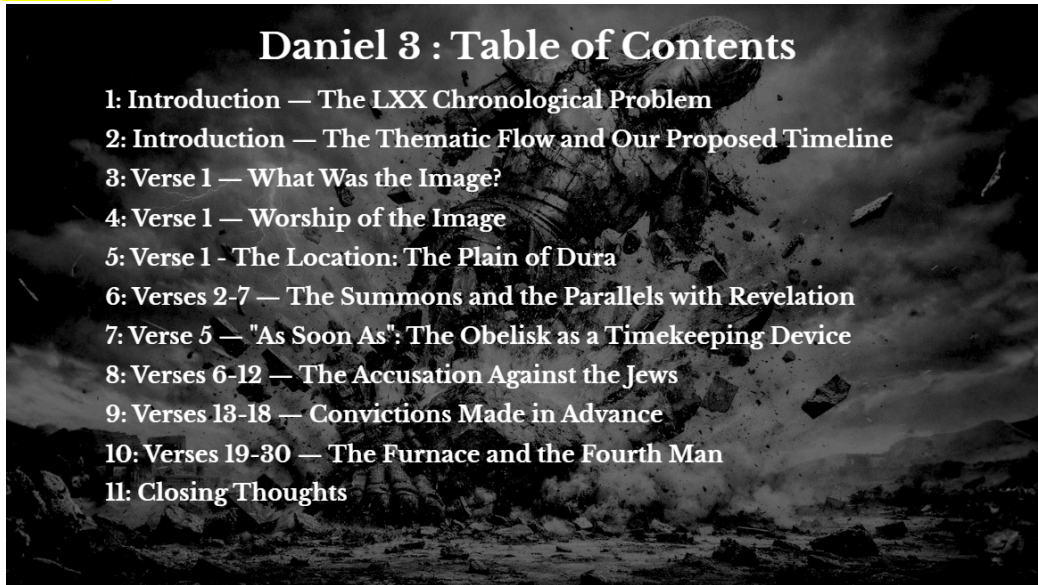
Tonight we are going to talk about 3 men who get thrown into a blazing furnace and live!

First, this chapter is the favorite chapter in the Old Testament for multitudes of believers through centuries of time. That presents its own problem — it is so discussed, so revered, and so admired that it can be hard to imagine learning anything new about it! We are happy to say we will solve that problem this evening. You are guaranteed to walk away with new insights tonight.

The second issue arises from the embedded assumptions that our familiarity with the text produces. When you have heard something presented in the same way redundantly for decades, it can be difficult to consider alternatives that your presumptions may have caused you to overlook. The answer to that issue will be entirely up to you — it will depend on the pliability of your heart. Tonight will be thorough and in depth! That's what you guys signed up for and it is what is necessary if we are to mine God's Word for things overlooked in previous generations.

Here is our table of contents!

(SLIDE)



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1: Introduction — The LXX Chronological Problem

As we get into the text tonight, we want you to know that the Septuagint (LXX) reads dramatically differently in the chronology of the opening verses and contains 60 additional verses not found in other manuscripts.

(READ SLIDE)

THE LXX OPENS DANIEL 3:1 THIS WAY:

“In the eighteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, when he was governing cities and countries and even all the inhabitants of the earth from India to Ethiopia, he constructed a golden image...”

Your English Bibles do not contain this. If the LXX is correct, then 16 years have passed since the beginning of chapter 2, which was in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar after his accession year. This would mean that many years of Nebuchadnezzar's military success had served to reinforce his pride — and in the beginning, this seemed like a plausible explanation for the contents of chapter 3. This explanation is initially appealing, but further study reveals it to be unwarranted and unlikely. Here are a few reasons why:

According to Jeremiah 52:29 and 2 Kings 25:8, Nebuchadnezzar would have been involved in a two-year-long siege at the fall of Jerusalem during this 18th-year period. This would make it doubtful that he was in Babylon taking the time to build a gold image. But that is only the first of the difficulties with the LXX in this regard.

(Do Not Read)



The Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain the LXX chronology. They are fragmentary but begin with the words "of gold" — and a line-by-line translation of the relevant fragment reads simply: *of gold / height / cubits 60 / width / cubits 6 / province in Babylon*. No date.

Since every fact or matter must be established upon 2 or more witnesses, we must triangulate between ancient manuscripts. The way triangulation functions is that we compare each relevant manuscript and evaluate the efficacy of a supposed deviation. In almost every case it is relatively easy to see how the wording is reconciled when triangulating between several languages. Unfortunately, this is not one of those cases, let's consult a few sources:

(Do Not Read)

Triangulation in Manuscripts

The **Peshitta** follows a text that must have been identical with the **Masoretic**, as also does the **Vulgate**. The date inserted into the Greek Version is improbable. At that time, if we take the chronology of 2 Kings 25:8, Nebuchadnezzar was engaged in the siege of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was taken in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, after a two years' siege.

Spence, H. D. M. (1909). Daniel (p. 95). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

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(Read Slide)

RESPECTED TEXTS DO NOT VALIDATE LXX DATE

- The Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew manuscripts, ~100 BC)
— do not have the LXX date
- The Peshitta (Syriac manuscripts, ~200–400 AD)
— does not have the date
- The Vulgate (Latin manuscripts, ~383–405 AD)
— does not have the date
- The Masoretic Text (Hebrew manuscripts, ~500–1000 AD)
— does not have the date.

The dates given in the LXX are not co-witnessed by any of the other manuscripts. While the date could theoretically be accurate — and the themes of the text would remain unharmed if it were — it has been the choice of every English translator to reject the LXX dates as an interpolation. To be clear, that may not be the case, and the dates could be accurate and simply have been omitted from the other manuscripts. But it does not appear so.

The LXX is a valuable tool, but it is also a Greek translation of the original Hebrew *Vorlage* (*Vor-la-guh*) that we do not currently possess. Often translators try to help their intended readers through interpolations that are well-meaning but often misleading. You have seen this in modern translators' efforts to identify the fourth kingdom from Daniel chapter 2. Remember, this was the only kingdom not specifically named within Daniel — and nevertheless, translators added their thoughts calling it Rome, to "help" us.

(Read Slide)

False Assumptions in Translation

Daniel 2:40 (AMP)

40 And the fourth kingdom [**Rome**] shall be strong as iron, since iron breaks to pieces and subdues all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these. [Dan. 7:7, 23.]

Daniel 2:40 (NASB95)

Rome

40 “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

Resources like the Amplified Bible and John McArthur's Study Bible both insert "Rome" into the interpretation of text, even though Daniel himself does not identify the fourth kingdom as Rome. If that insertion turns out to be wrong, a future generation comparing our translations will ask the same kind of question we are now asking about the LXX.

It is also possible that the other item inserted into verse 1 in the LXX — "from India to Ethiopia" — is an example of Jewish translators trying to relate to the Hellenistic world in which the LXX was composed. Those were the specific boundaries of Alexander the Great's empire.

Additionally, the 60 or so extra verses in the LXX chapter are largely expansions of the responses of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — the Greek mind values logic and extended explanation, the lack of co-witness and the seemingly Greek influence on a Hebrew/Aramaic document leads us to believe those insertions should be dismissed.

(Read Slide)

Translation Comparison of Isaiah 11:8

Isa 11:8 NIV84

8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

Isa 11:8 ESV

8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

Isa 11:8 KJV

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

To illustrate how discomfoting but necessary this kind of textual triangulation is: imagine discovering the 1984 NIV, the 2011 NIV, and the KJV one thousand years from now and having to determine which was accurate. The oldest is the KJV, but in some cases the newest translation gets closest to the meaning. We cannot settle that debate tonight, but this is the kind of triangulation we are doing — not higher criticism, not eliminating things from the text, but looking at all the available information and asking why one source diverges from all the others.

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2: Introduction — The Thematic Flow and Our Proposed Timeline

We cannot know with absolute certainty when Daniel 3 takes place. However, it seems intentionally connected to the content and chronology of Daniel 2.

Thematic Overview:

Daniel 1: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are introduced

- They are tested together for 10 days
- The result was that they were 10 times better than all other young men
- The end of the chapter hints at Daniel's ability to understand dreams

Daniel 2: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are under threat of execution

- They seek God together and He answers them
- **Daniel is the focal point** even though they are a team acting together
- The chapter ends with Daniel at the royal court and in a high position
- Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are administrators within the province but not in the royal court.

Daniel 3: Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are the focal point

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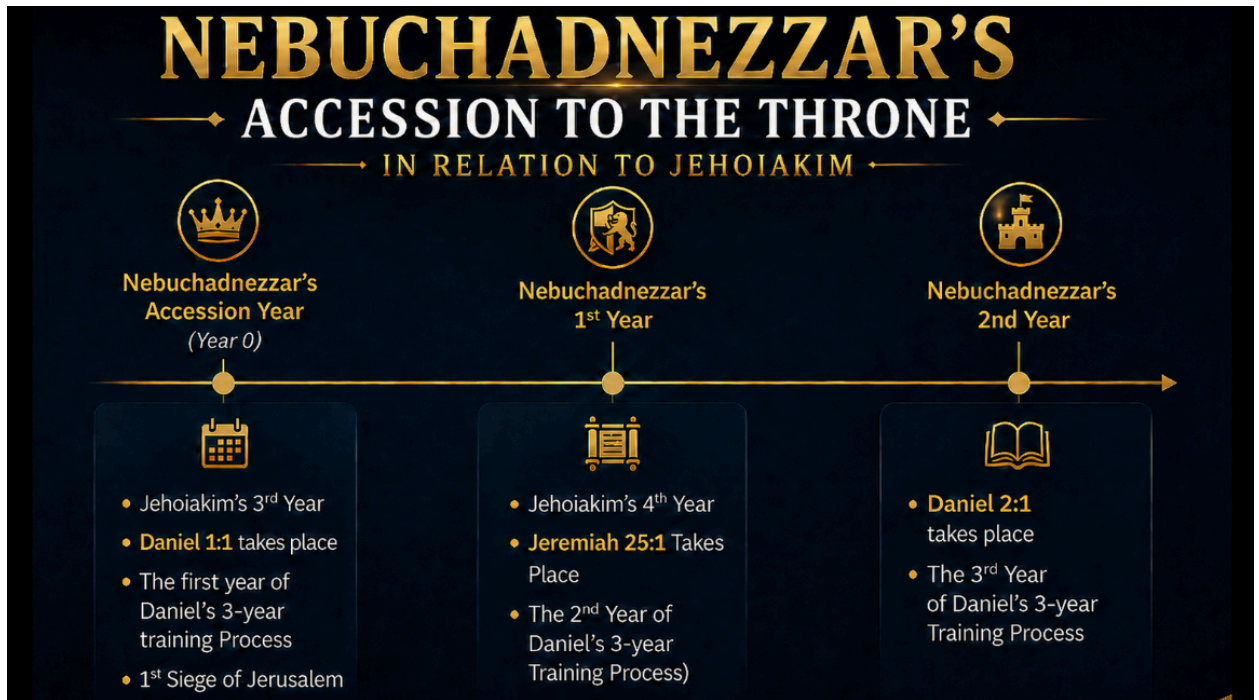
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Daniel 3: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are the focal point

We acknowledge that the LXX chronology might be right, and that would not do harm to the other manuscripts that would then simply be viewed as omitting the date. If the LXX is correct, we have moved to the time period of the third siege. However, given that the LXX includes 60 extra verses in this chapter, another timeline seems more plausible and consistent with the other ancient manuscripts. We would like to suggest a timeframe that looks like this:

(Do Not Read)



Nabopolassar dies following the Battle of Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar begins his accession year in approximately 605 BC and sieges Jerusalem, taking Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah captive — the setting of Daniel 1:1.

Nebuchadnezzar begins his first official year as king between 604 and 603 BC, during the second year of Daniel and his companions' training.

Daniel 2 picks up in the second official year of Nebuchadnezzar's kingship (between 603 and 602 BC), which is the third year of Daniel and his companions' training.

As we approach Daniel 3, the question is: what is the timeframe? Is it nearly two decades from the rest of the storyline, or did something happen in just a handful of years following Nebuchadnezzar's dream that made him insecure? We believe something happened in immediate proximity to the Daniel 2 dream.

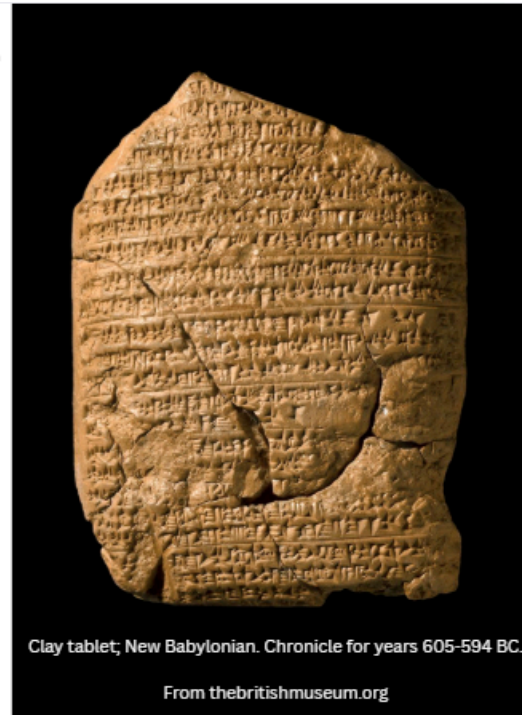
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The Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle

From the Curator:

“This historical chronicle describes Nebuchadnezzar’s first campaign against Jerusalem in 597 BC. The tablet covers the period of 12 years from the 21st

year of Nabopolassar (605 BC, which was also Nebuchadnezzar’s accession year), through to the 11th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.”



A cuneiform tablet housed in the British Museum—known as the **Jerusalem Chronicle** (or the **Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle**)—may shed light on why Nebuchadnezzar suddenly felt the need to reaffirm his authority. This secular Babylonian record covers a twelve-year period, from the 21st year of Nabopolassar (605 BC—the same year as Nebuchadnezzar's accession year) through the 11th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Significantly, it records Nebuchadnezzar's accession year using the very same Babylonian dating system we have followed throughout this series. The regnal years and chronology align remarkably well with the timeline we have proposed. Here is an expert from that tablet (If you would like to read the full transcript, please see the appendix in our published notes).

(Do Not Read)

THE JERUSALEM CHRONICLE 2

—♦— ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURE AND THE CUNEIFORM ACCOUNT —♦—



“ The seventh year, in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched on Ḫatti, and set up his quarters facing the city of Yeḥud. In the month of Adar, the second day, he took the city and captured the king. He installed there a king of his choice. He colle[cted] its massive tribute and went back to Babylon.

[The eighth] year, [in the mon]th of Ṭebeth, the king of Akkad [marched] on Ḫatti as far as Carchemiš.

”

- The 2nd seige of Jerusalem was in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year (5 years after Daniel 2 and the dream) and it occurred while he was returning from Turkey/Syria
- Jehoiakim was King of Judah and abandoned obedience to Nebuchadnezzar after a period of years and was now in rebellion
- Jehoiakim was captured and replaced in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year.
- The following year Nebuchadnezzar had to again put down a rebellion in the area of Turkey and Syria

Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, ed. Benjamin R. Foster, vol. 19, *Writings from the Ancient World* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 231.

Lines 11–14 on the reverse side of the tablet are particularly relevant:

The seventh year, in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched on Ḫatti, and set up his quarters facing the city of Yeḥud. In the month of Adar, the second day, he took the city and captured the king. He installed there a king of his choice. He colle[cted] its massive tribute and went back to Babylon.

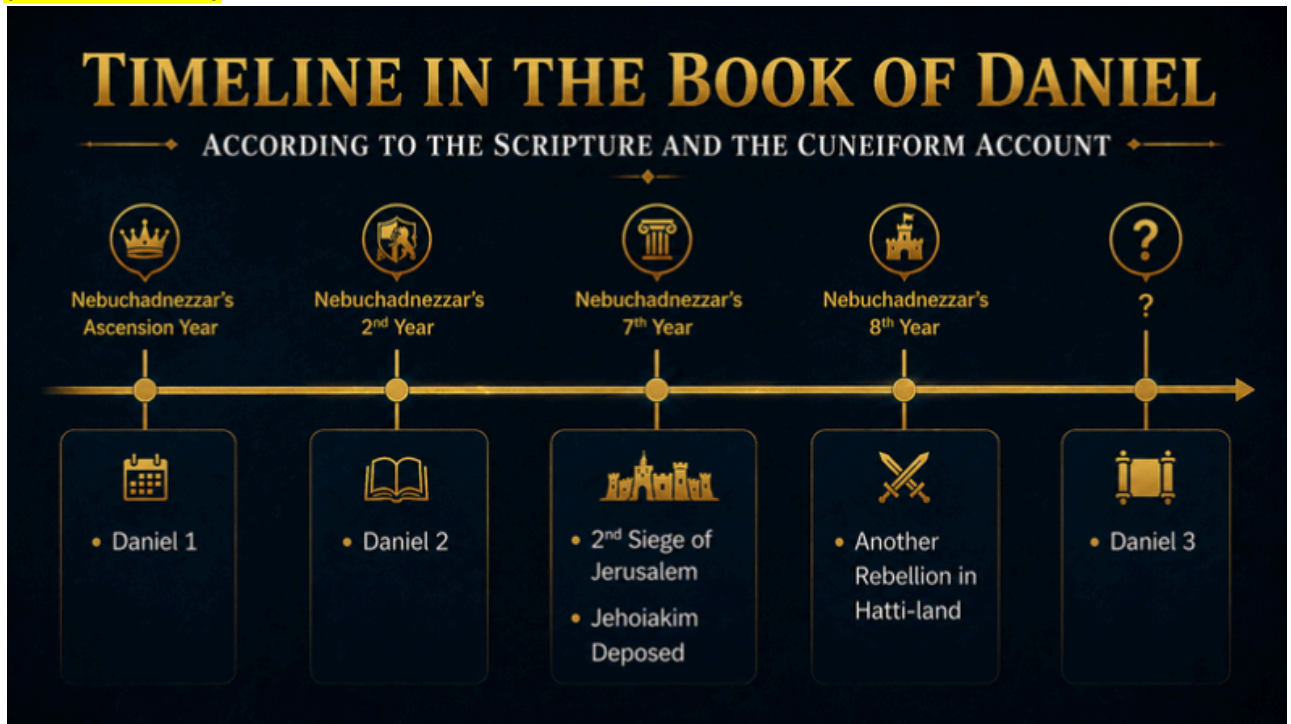
—————
[The eighth] year, [in the mon]th of Ṭebeth, the king of Akkad [marched] on Ḫatti as far as Carchemiš.

Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, ed. Benjamin R. Foster, vol. 19, *Writings from the Ancient World* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 231.

The second siege of Jerusalem was therefore in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year — five years after the dream of Daniel 2. This occurred while he was returning from the Hatti-land (eastern Turkey/northern Syria). Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had been a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar but abandoned that allegiance and rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar had to capture him and replace

him. The following year — Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year — he had to return to the same region to put down another revolt likely involving Jehoiakim's allies.

(Do Not Read)



Here is the condensed picture:

- **Daniel 1:** Nebuchadnezzar is new — still in his accession year.
- **Daniel 2:** Nebuchadnezzar is in his second official year as king. The chapter displays his insecurities with the advisors likely left over from his father's time. It also shows his warming to the four Jewish heroes of royal descent who prove to be excellent advisors.
- **Between Daniel 2 and Daniel 3:** A rebellion has occurred under Jehoiakim during Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year. After putting down that Jewish revolt, Nebuchadnezzar had to return in his eighth year to the same area to put down another revolt, probably from the very people Jehoiakim had allied with.

This is likely the setting Daniel 3 picks up in — sometime after Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year.

This would mean that Nebuchadnezzar had a genuine experience in Daniel 2 — his heart was genuinely moved — but that his heart was subsequently hardened by Jehoiakim's rebellious actions. Note that our four Hebrew young men are of royal descent. Who are they related to? Jehoiakim. The repetitive uprisings in the Turkey/Syria area may have further compounded Nebuchadnezzar's insecurity as a leader. While Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had only ever been helpful to the king, the king of Judah back in Israel had been rebellious, broken his word, sought alliances against Babylon, and forced his own removal. This may explain why Nebuchadnezzar was so easily manipulated against the Jews in chapter 3.

Furthermore, if you are familiar with the book of Jeremiah, you are aware that Jeremiah was repeatedly warning the Jewish people and their leaders against this kind of rebellion on Jehoiakim's part. Go back and reread Jeremiah 25 and Jeremiah 36 — they provide the political background in Israel for the very events happening between Daniel 2 and Daniel 3, because Jeremiah is repeatedly warning Jehoiakim: do not rebel against Babylon. Submit to what God is doing. And the Judean leaders rebelled anyway.

We have laid out our hypothesis regarding the timeline. It is always possible that the LXX was right and many of the same motivators could be present at the time of the third siege. However, as we get into Daniel 4, we believe our timeline will become even more convincing.

As we read Daniel 3, let us take note: when Israel obeys the Lord, there is supernatural deliverance. But when the leaders of Israel disobey the prophets of the Lord, it becomes more difficult even for the faithful Jews. Tonight we will read about faithful Jews and supernatural deliverance — but the suffering that precedes that deliverance is connected to the faithlessness of Judah's leaders back in the land.

Read and Pray

Pop Quiz #1

According to our proposed timeline, what event probably hardened Nebuchadnezzar after Daniel 2?

A. The death of his father

B. Jehoiakim's rebellion

C. His traitorous advisors

D. His mother-in-law...

3: Verse 1 — What Was the Image?

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Google results for Daniel 3 image of gold

The collage displays a variety of search results for the query 'Daniel 3 image of gold'. It includes:

- Images of the golden statue from different perspectives and artistic renderings.
- Text snippets from Bible verses, such as Daniel 3:1-7, describing the king's command to build the image and the king's decree.
- Links to Bible study resources, commentaries, and educational websites.
- Related searches for 'daniel 3 golden image', 'nebuchadnezzar golden image', and 'daniel 3 gold statue'.

In the opening lines of Daniel 3, the majority of Christians throughout the ages have immediately imagined a giant humanoid statue — something like the figure in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. The traditional associations with the image of gold are less than half correct. Let's start with what is probably right and then address the numerous things wrong with the commonly held view.

What Daniel 2 tells us about gold:

Daniel 2 refers to gold four times:

- **Daniel 2:32 (NIV)**

The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze.

The head of the statue Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was gold.

- **Daniel 2:35 (NIV)**

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing-floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

A rock struck the feet of the statue with such force that it broke even the gold head to pieces.

- **Daniel 2:38 (NIV)**

In your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

Nebuchadnezzar's dominion was represented by the head of gold. Daniel literally said to him, "You are that head of gold!"

- **Daniel 2:45 (NIV)**

This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands — a rock that broke the iron, the bronze,

the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.

The dream represented future events for the dominion of Babylon and the successive empires that would rule the region — all of which would fall to the coming Kingdom of God represented by the rock that became a huge mountain.

Nebuchadnezzar undoubtedly liked being the head of gold — the most valued, the supreme. But focusing on that conclusion entirely misses the point of the vision. All the gentile kingdoms will fall to the Kingdom of God. He made an image of gold — but it was not of himself, and it was not a replica of the statue from Daniel 2.

Read verse 1 again carefully:

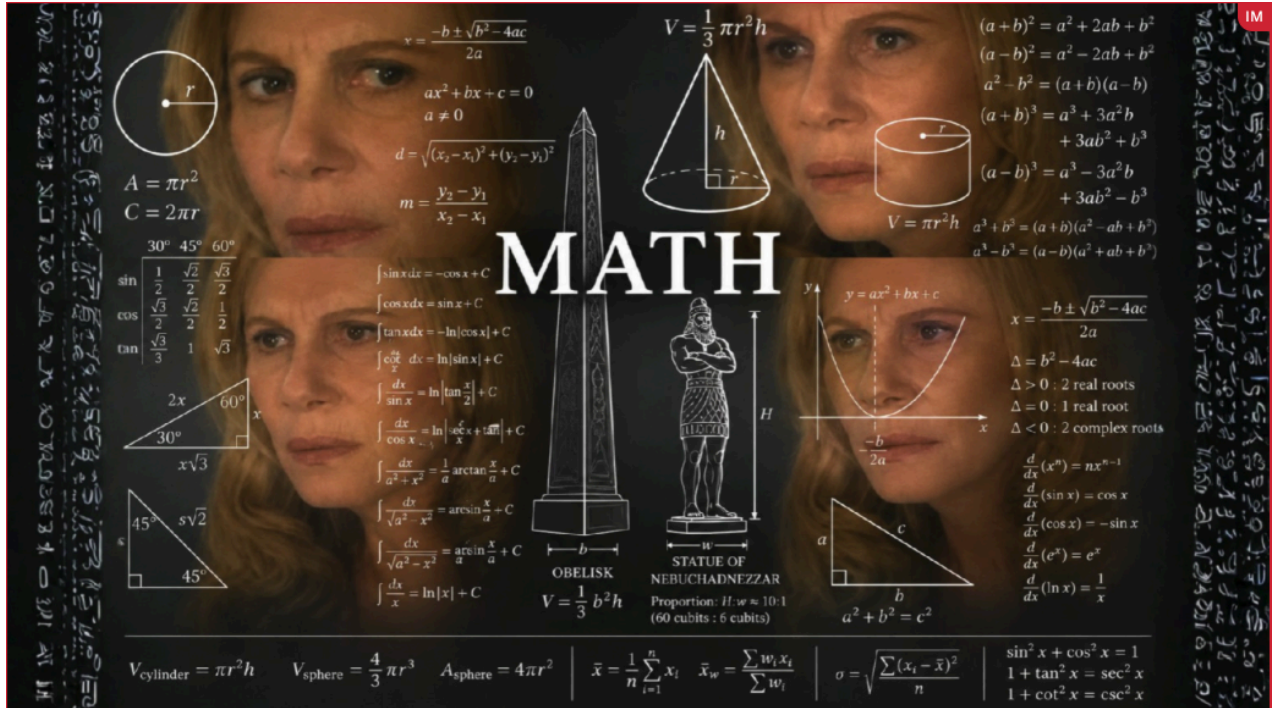
- **Daniel 3:1 (NIV)**

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide.

The text does not say the image is of Nebuchadnezzar. It does not say it is a statue at all. It only says "an image." The proportions alone make a human statue impossible: the height is ten times the width. No human figure has those proportions. Most humans fall approximately around the range of a 4:1 ratio of height to width. The tall Egyptian statues you may have seen are still only about 6:1 at best.

Furthermore, this image is 60 cubits by 6 cubits in the original language. Our dynamic English translations obscure the symbolism by converting the units. 60 units multiplied by 6 units is not accidental — the product is intentionally 360 units.

Can you feel it? Do you know what's coming?



The number 60 was not random, it was the most important number in Babylonian civilization.

The image is 60 by 6. We live in a world where the number 10 feels natural. Even here in America, where we do not mainly use the metric system in daily life, we still instinctively understand base 10. Our money is decimal, you tip your waiter...20%...2-10s. Percentages are based on 100. We count by tens, hundreds, and thousands. The metric system may not be our native measurement system, but it is familiar enough that we understand the idea immediately: a civilization can organize its measurements around a defining number. For the modern world, that number is often 10. For Babylon, that number was 60.

Babylon thought in sixties. Their mathematics were built on a sexagesimal, or base-60, system. Here is how it worked:

- o **Their year** was reckoned as **360 days** (12 months $\times$ 30 days or 6- 60s), a calendar associated with the ordering of the cosmos by Marduk in the *Enuma Elish*, which is the Babylonian story of creation.
- o **Astronomy** was directed by Babylonian priest-astronomers who divided the heavens into **twelve regions or 2- 6s**, tracking the movement of the stars and planets.

- o Sixty was the foundation for measurement, calculation, and geometry.
- o **Time** was ultimately divided into units based on this same system—a legacy that survives today in **60 minutes per hour** and **60 seconds per minute**.
- o **Geometry** inherited the Babylonian division of a circle into **360 degrees**, another reflection of their numerical worldview. Every time you say, "you just did a complete 180 or someone does a 360 dunk, all of this came from Babylon!

The way the Babylonians reckoned time was directly linked to the worship of their gods. Counting in base 60, having 360 degrees in a circle, 60 minutes in an hour, 60 seconds in a minute — all of this was tied to the divine order established by their gods.

- o (Michael Snearly, "Astrology," in The Lexham Bible Dictionary, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).)

What kind of monument...

- o has a **10:1** height-to-width ratio?
- o is associated with kings and imperial victories?
- o reaches toward the heavens?
- o is connected with astronomy, the movement of the sun, and sacred space?
- o often bore inscriptions celebrating rulers?
- o frequently ended in a gleaming pyramid that could be covered in precious metal?

An obelisk.

Obelisks have been used to record victories in Egypt since 2000 BC. Nebuchadnezzar came into power immediately after defeating Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Obelisks from Egypt or imitating Egypt have circulated the world since biblical times — approximately 70 known obelisks exist today. Obelisks have been used to promote the divine leadership of pagan rulers since the dawn of civilization. Obelisks have been used to measure time and

draw attention to celestial deities for millennia. And obelisks often had a **golden pyramid-shaped cap at the pinnacle.**



The obelisk in Central Park, New York — dating from the 1200s BC — shares the same 10:1 ratio as the image described in Daniel 3. This obelisk is a genuine ancient Egyptian obelisk and stands 71 feet tall. It was originally erected at Heliopolis by Thutmose III, later moved to Alexandria, where it stood with its twin at the entrance of the Caesareum, a temple associated with Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. It was brought from Egypt to New York and erected in Central Park in 1881.

However, Nebuchadnezzar's gold image/obelisk is even larger:

(SLIDE)

Nebuchadnezzar's 90 foot tall obelisk



The height of the structure (60 cubits) is roughly equivalent to the height of six mid-sized sedans stacked end to end, or two-and-a-half city buses, or approximately two humpback whales or this 9 story building. The width (6 cubits) is roughly the width of less than one mid-sized sedan.

For those still imagining a human statue: the Statue of Liberty stands 111 feet tall with a width of approximately 35 feet — a ratio of roughly 3:1. Nebuchadnezzar's image is 10:1. It is not a statue. Various interpretive methods have been adopted over the centuries to protect the statue theory — pedestals, textual manipulation — but it clearly makes far more sense to view the golden image as an obelisk associated both with the keeping of time and with the worship of Babylonian deities.

The Vatican obelisk in St. Peter's Square is a fitting modern example and it is also from Egypt. It was brought to Rome by Emperor Caligula in 37 AD. Originally inscribed to divine Augustus and divine Tiberius — the only two emperors whose lives crossed the life of Jesus — it is now dedicated to the Holy Cross and topped with a bronze cross said to contain a fragment of the true cross. Crucially: it is also a sundial. Its shadows mark noon over the signs of the zodiac inscribed in the white marble discs in the paving of the square. The same pagan image, repurposed, still functioning as a marker of

time over the signs of the zodiac — in the center of the world's most prominent Catholic site.

The image of Daniel 3 is more than a monument; it is a Babylonian statement about cosmic order. Picture an obelisk rising toward the heavens, catching the light of the sun, casting its shadow across the ground like a massive sundial. The heavens shine down, the shadow moves, and time is measured by the circle — **360 degrees**, the number produced by **60×6** . Babylon's world was ordered by sixties: base-60 mathematics, the 360-degree circle, the movement of heavenly bodies, the calendar, the priest-astronomers, and the gods they served. So when Nebuchadnezzar erects an image **60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide**, the numbers themselves speak the language of Babylonian time, measurement, empire, and cosmic authority.

(Do Not Read)



From Babylon's 60×6 to Revelation's 600, 60, and 6

Babylon — Daniel 3

60×6

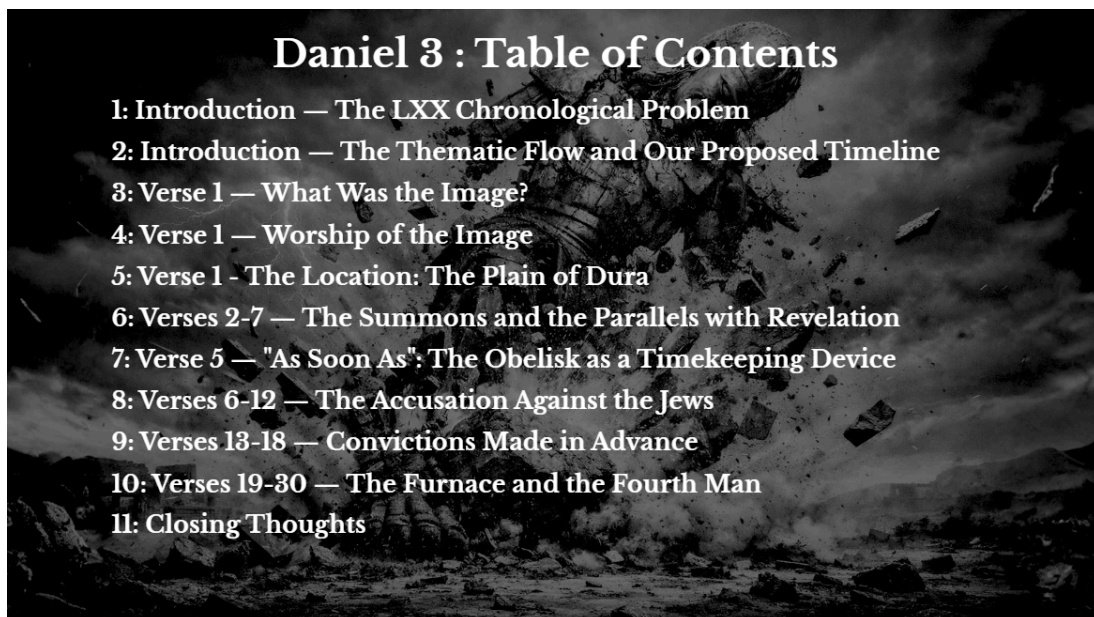
Revelation 13:18

$\chi = 600$
 $\xi = 60$
 $\zeta = 6$

“This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is...”

Consider this, in Revelation 13:18, the number of the beast is not merely presented as “three sixes,” but as **six hundred, sixty, and six** — **$600 + 60 + 6$** . It is the number of man, the number of beastly empire, the number of human power exalted in rebellion against God. Daniel 3 gives us an earlier Babylonian pattern: a ruler, an image, a universal command to worship, death for those who refuse, and symbolic numbers tied to human empire

reaching toward heaven. Daniel 3 is not the final beast, but it is a prototype — Babylon's image of gold foreshadowing the final idolatrous system that will demand the worship that belongs to God alone.



4: Verse 1 — Worship of the Image

- o **Daniel 1:1 (NIV84)**

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

As we stated in the introduction this chapter is so prolific it is easy for the true details of the story to be missed in all the retellings Christians are exposed to. We already covered the misunderstanding concerning what the image actually was, but with that comes another: many believe Nebuchadnezzar is demanding worship of himself—but the text makes it clear he is not! Consider the repetition across the chapter:

(Do Not Read)



- **Daniel 3:5** "You must fall down and worship the image of gold that King" Nebuchadnezzar has set up.
- **Daniel 3:7** "All the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."
- **Daniel 3:10** "Everyone who hears the sound... must fall down and worship the image of gold."
- **Daniel 3:12** "They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

- o **Daniel 3:14** "Is it true... that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?"
- o **Daniel 3:15** "If you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good."
- o **Daniel 3:18** "We will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

There are at least seven references to "*worship(ed) the image of gold*" in this chapter. The peshat rendering makes it clear that this is not a demand for personal worship of Nebuchadnezzar. The chain of assumptions starts with "*it must be a statue just like the one in chapter 2*" — which we debunked. Then: "*he probably made it of himself*" — which the text does not say. Then: "*he wanted everyone to worship him*" — which the text also does not say.

These types of interpretive mistakes are common and seem inconsequential. But, in reality they hide or take away from the actual impact or story the Spirit is trying to tell. When taken with its proper reading, the conclusion of chapter three is more profound!

- o **Daniel 3:28 (NIV)**
"They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."

From Nebuchadnezzar's own mouth: the worship of the image of gold was associated with the worship of Babylonian gods. As we stated, this is likely because the image was an obelisk that included Nebuchadnezzar's achievements, his divine right to rule, and detailed the time and associations of worship for the Babylonian deities — exactly like the obelisk at the Vatican.

Nebuchadnezzar demanding worship to *his* gods through this image and then turning to worship Adonai is remarkable considering all the work he has put into his own idol worship.

Let's keep reading to see how we get there.

- **Verse 1 - The Location: The Plain of Dura**

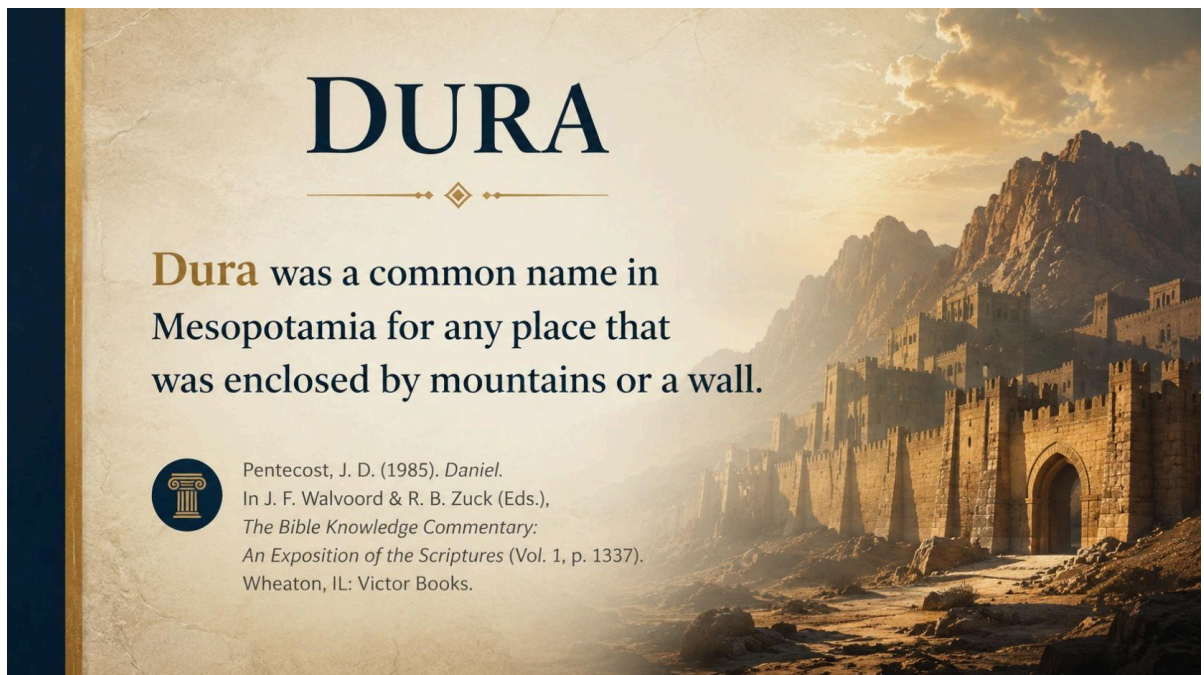
Let's read verse one again:

- **Daniel 1:1 (NIV84)**

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

All we know from the text is that the image was set up "on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon."

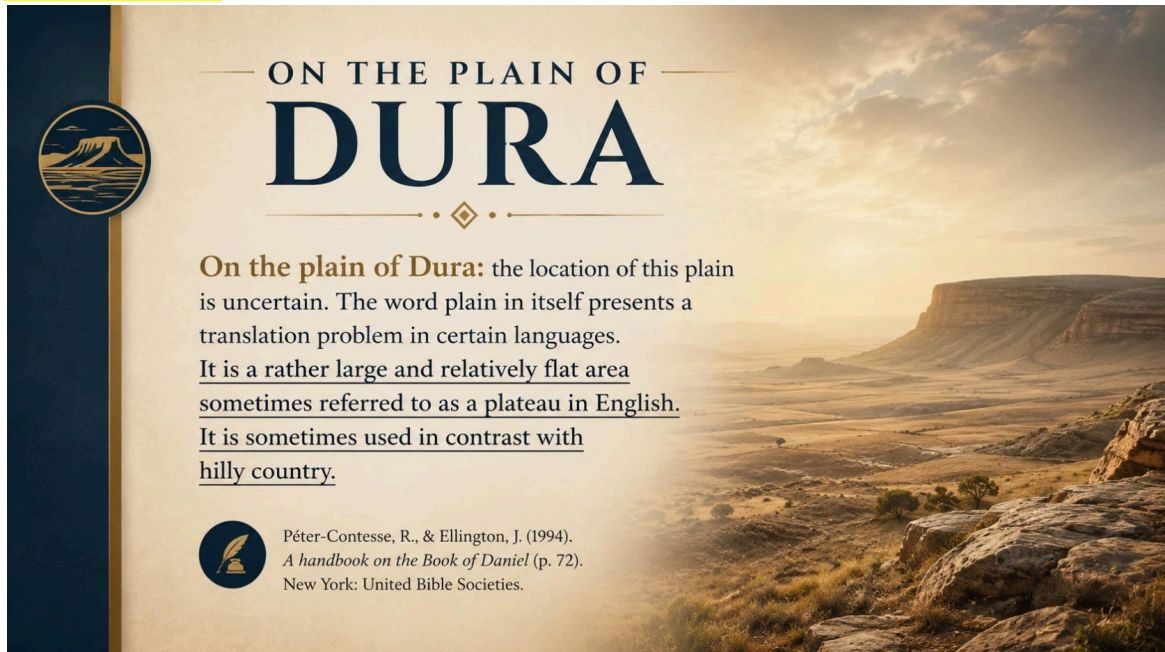
This is what BKC says about Dura:



DURA was a common name in Mesopotamia for any place that was enclosed by mountains or a wall.

Ironically, however, this location is called the Plain of Dura. Rather than picturing a walled city, Daniel describes an open area. Now consider how the UBS explains the expression:

(Do Not Read)



On the plain of Dura: the location of this plain is uncertain. The word plain in itself presents a translation problem in certain languages. It is rather large and relatively flat area sometimes referred to as a plateau in English. It is sometimes used in contrast with a hilly country.

However challenging the exact pinpointing of linguistics may be, let's consider what we do know. The phrase is involving a contrast, a hilled or walled enclosure on a large and relatively flat area in contrast with hilly country.

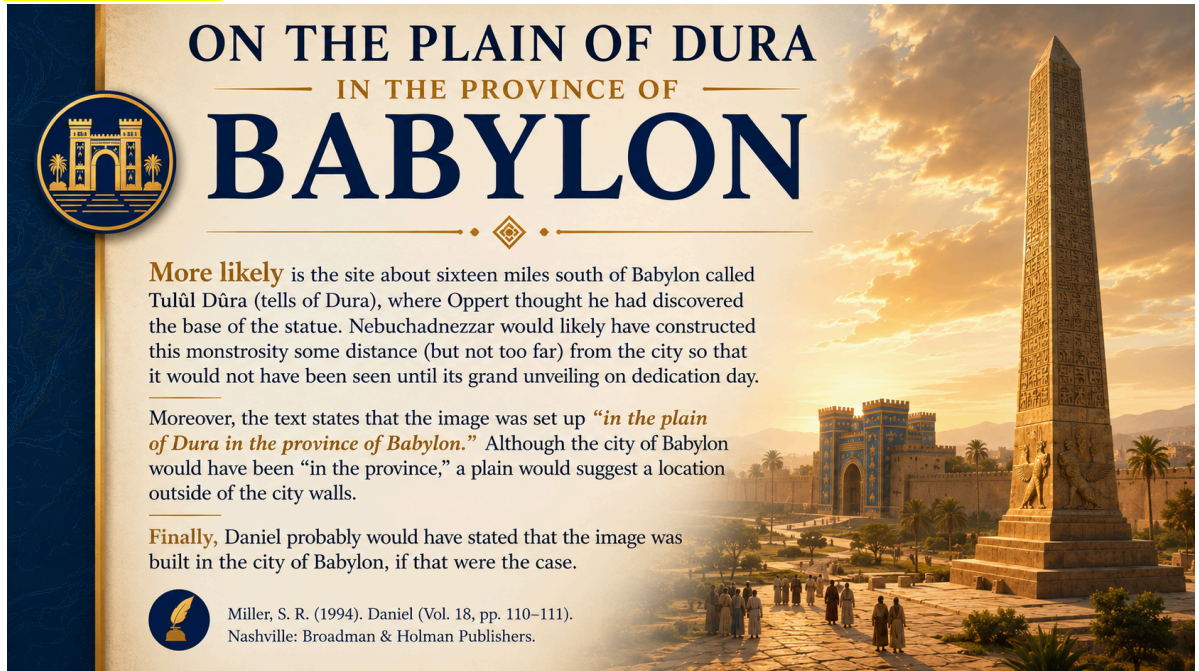
Nothing in the description sounds like Nebuchadnezzar's royal palace, where Daniel served. Instead, it better fits the provincial region over which Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had been appointed administrators.

Remember that Chapter 2 closed with these words:

- **Daniel 2:49 (NIV - Anglicised)**
49 Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.**

Here is how one commentator summed up his opinion of the location of the gold image:

(Do Not Read)



ON THE PLAIN OF DURA
— IN THE PROVINCE OF —
BABYLON

More likely is the site about sixteen miles south of Babylon called Tulûl Dûra (tells of Dura), where Oppert thought he had discovered the base of the statue. Nebuchadnezzar would likely have constructed this monstrosity some distance (but not too far) from the city so that it would not have been seen until its grand unveiling on dedication day.

Moreover, the text states that the image was set up *"in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon."* Although the city of Babylon would have been "in the province," a plain would suggest a location outside of the city walls.

Finally, Daniel probably would have stated that the image was built in the city of Babylon, if that were the case.

 Miller, S. R. (1994). Daniel (Vol. 18, pp. 110–111). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

On the Plain of Dura in the Province of Babylon

More likely is the site about sixteen miles south of Babylon called Tulûl Dûra (tells of Dura), where Oppert thought he had discovered the base of the statue. Nebuchadnezzar would likely have constructed this monstrosity some distance (but not too far) from the city so that it would not have been seen until its grand unveiling on dedication day.

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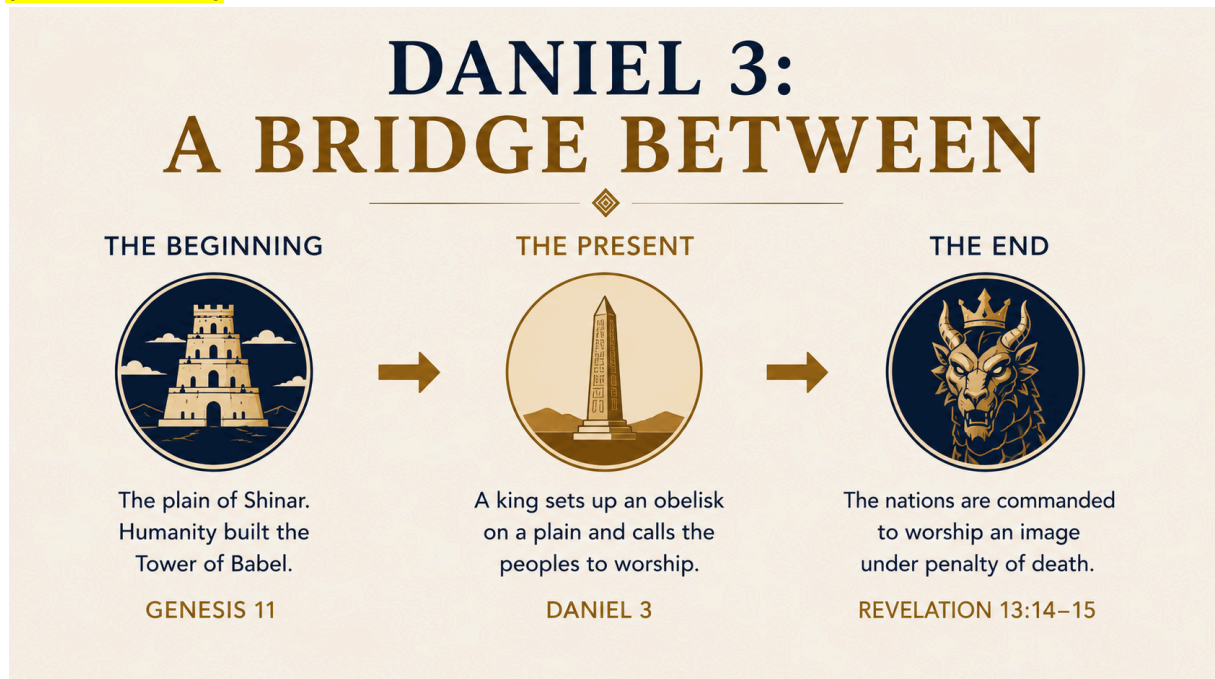
Finally, Daniel probably would have stated that the image was built in the city of Babylon, if that were the case.

This explanation also provides what we believe is the most natural answer to one of the chapter's biggest questions: *"Where is Daniel?"*

So as we move deeper into the text, it is likely that Daniel is not mentioned because Daniel remained at the royal palace on official duty. The events of Daniel 3 are taking place on the plain of Dura in a provincial area of Babylon — where Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were administrators. That geographical separation also serves a purpose. Chapter 2 focused on Daniel's faithfulness. Chapter 3 intentionally shifts the spotlight to his three friends, allowing their courage and unwavering devotion to God to stand on its own.

Before we continue, this chapter not only looks back to the beginning of the Bible, but also points forward to its end.

(Do Not Read)



The setting immediately recalls the plain of Shinar, where humanity gathered to build the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). Once again, a king erects a monument to human glory on a plain and calls the peoples to worship around it.

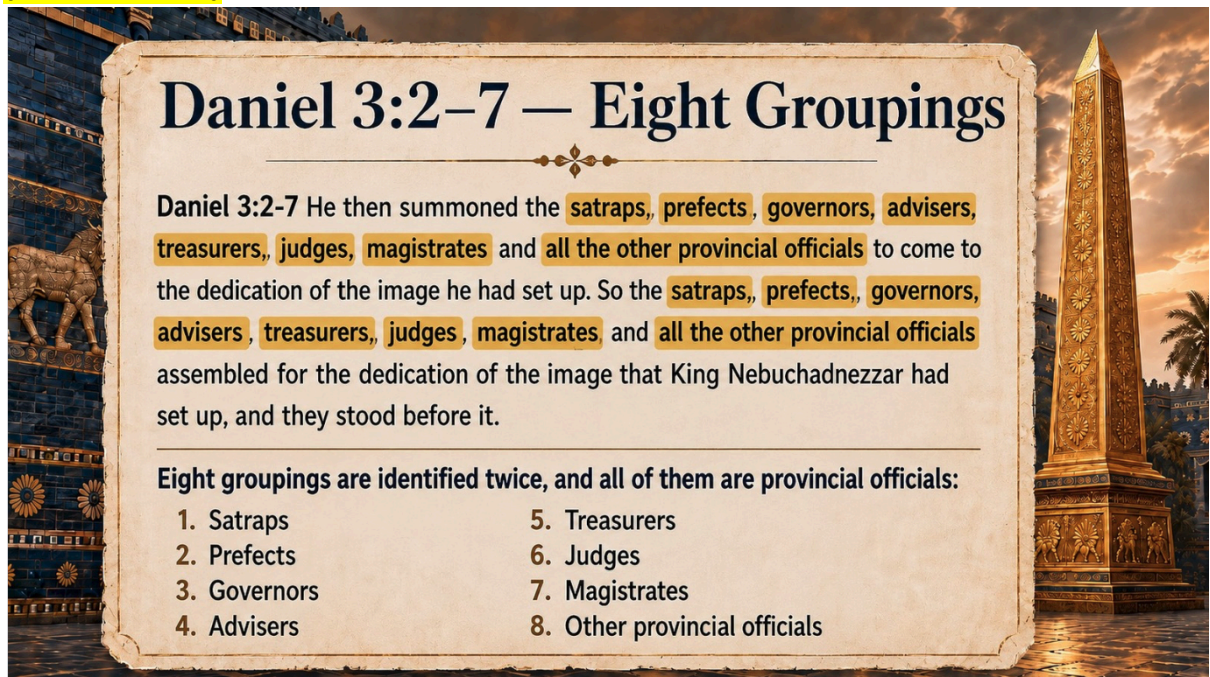
And, as we'll soon discover, what comes next in Daniel 3 also foreshadows the scenes of Revelation, where the nations are again commanded to worship an image under penalty of death (Revelation 13:14-15).

- **Verses 2-7 — The Summons and the Parallels with Revelation**

He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Eight groupings are identified twice, and all of them are provincial officials:

(Do Not Read)



Daniel 3:2-7 — Eight Groupings

Daniel 3:2-7 He then summoned the **satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates** and **all the other provincial officials** to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the **satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates** and **all the other provincial officials** assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

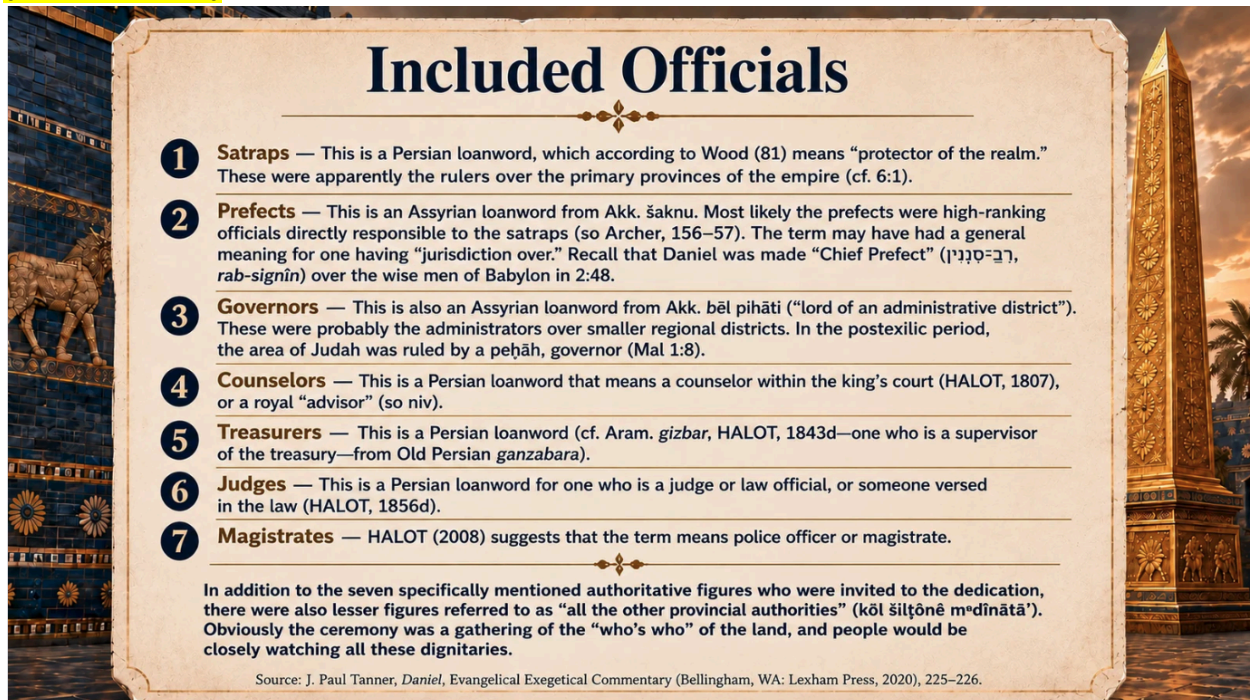
Eight groupings are identified twice, and all of them are provincial officials:

1. Satraps	5. Treasurers
2. Prefects	6. Judges
3. Governors	7. Magistrates
4. Advisers	8. Other provincial officials

- Satraps
- Prefects
- Governors
- Advisers
- Treasurers
- Judges
- Magistrates
- Other provincial officials

Here is the EEC breaking down these terms and why they are listed in this way.

(Do Not Read)



Included Officials

- 1 Satraps** — This is a Persian loanword, which according to Wood (81) means “protector of the realm.” These were apparently the rulers over the primary provinces of the empire (cf. 6:1).
- 2 Prefects** — This is an Assyrian loanword from Akk. *šaknu*. Most likely the prefects were high-ranking officials directly responsible to the satraps (so Archer, 156–57). The term may have had a general meaning for one having “jurisdiction over.” Recall that Daniel was made “Chief Prefect” (רַב־סִנְיָן, *rab-signîn*) over the wise men of Babylon in 2:48.
- 3 Governors** — This is also an Assyrian loanword from Akk. *bēl pihāti* (“lord of an administrative district”). These were probably the administrators over smaller regional districts. In the postexilic period, the area of Judah was ruled by a *peḥāh*, governor (Mal 1:8).
- 4 Counselors** — This is a Persian loanword that means a counselor within the king’s court (HALOT, 1807), or a royal “advisor” (so *niv*).
- 5 Treasurers** — This is a Persian loanword (cf. Aram. *gizbar*, HALOT, 1843d—one who is a supervisor of the treasury—from Old Persian *ganzabara*).
- 6 Judges** — This is a Persian loanword for one who is a judge or law official, or someone versed in the law (HALOT, 1856d).
- 7 Magistrates** — HALOT (2008) suggests that the term means police officer or magistrate.

In addition to the seven specifically mentioned authoritative figures who were invited to the dedication, there were also lesser figures referred to as “all the other provincial authorities” (*kōl šiltōnē mādīnātā*). Obviously the ceremony was a gathering of the “who’s who” of the land, and people would be closely watching all these dignitaries.

Source: J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 225–226.

3:2–3 *The dedication of the statue.* Nebuchadnezzar decided to have an elaborate dedication ceremony for his new statue, during which the important officials of his realm would be in attendance. The following officials were included:

- 1) satraps (אַחֲשָׁרְפָּנַיִּא, *’āḥašdarpⁿnayyā*): This is a Persian loanword, which according to Wood (81) means “protector of the realm.” These were apparently the rulers over the primary provinces of the empire (cf. 6:1).
- 2) prefects (רַב־סִנְיָן, *signayyā*): This is an Assyrian loanword from Akk. *šaknu*. Most likely the prefects were high-ranking officials directly responsible to the satraps (so Archer, 156–57). The term may have had a general meaning for one having “jurisdiction over.” Recall that Daniel was made “Chief Prefect” (רַב־סִנְיָן, *rab-signîn*) over the wise men of Babylon in 2:48.
- 3) governors (פַּהֲאָוֹתָא, *paḥāwātā*): This is also an Assyrian loanword from Akk. *bēl pihāti* (“lord of an administrative district”). These were

probably the administrators over smaller regional districts. In the postexilic period, the area of Judah was ruled by a *peḥāh*, governor (Mal 1:8).

4) counselors (אַדְרָגָזִי, *ʾăḏargāzʾerayyā*): This is a Persian loanword that means a counselor within the king's court (*HALOT*, 1807), or a royal “advisor” (so *niv*).

5) treasurers (גִּזְבָּרִי, *gəḏābʾerayyā*): This is a Persian loanword (cf. *Aram. gizbar*, *HALOT*, 1843d—one who is a supervisor of the treasury—from Old Persian *ganzabara*).

6) judges (דִּתְבָּרִי, *dəṭābʾerayyā*): This is a Persian loanword for one who is a judge or law official, or someone versed in the law (*HALOT*, 1856d).

7) magistrates (תִּפְתָּיִ, *tiptāyē*): *HALOT* (2008) suggests that the term means police officer or magistrate.

In addition to the seven specifically mentioned authoritative figures who were invited to the dedication, there were also lesser figures referred to as “all the other provincial authorities” (*kōl šiltōnê məḏînāṭā*). Obviously the ceremony was a gathering of the “who’s who” of the land, and people would be closely watching all these dignitaries

J. Paul Tanner, [*Daniel*](#), *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 225–226.

The point this should make to the reader is that every group of governmental authority without question complied in blind obedience — except one group: the faithful Jews, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. This widespread idolatrous image worship is paralleled in the book of Revelation—the similarities are striking.

(Do Not Read)

THE IMAGE, THE MARK, AND THE END

REVELATION 13:12–16

¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an **image** for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the **image** of the beast, so that the **image** of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the **image** of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

REVELATION 19:19–20

¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its **image**. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

o Revelation 13:12–16 (ESV)

¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an **image** for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the **image** of the beast, so that the **image** of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the **image** of the beast to be slain. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

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those who worshiped its **image**. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

Revelation 13 has an enigmatic figure who commands the worship of an image. Revelation 19:20 names this figure as a "false prophet." Now consider Daniel 3:4 with that in mind:

- o **Daniel 3:4–5 (NIV)**

⁴Then the **herald** loudly proclaimed, "Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: ⁵As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

Revelation is clearly paralleling the story of Daniel — with a "false prophet" substituted for the herald, and the worship of an image commanded to peoples, nations, and men of every language. These kinds of patterns bring light to the language used of the final Anti-Christ powers:

- o **Revelation 17:4–5 (KJV 1900)**

⁵And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Babylon becomes a prophetic name for evil Gentile powers not because it is in the same exact locale or the same governmental system—but because it follows the pattern.

We want to take a moment and try to help you imagine what it might have been like hearing the music and being in that scene. Imagine that you are in the same scene as Hananiah, Mishaël, or Azariah. Now imagine that you are hearing the music.

<<Eerie babylon.mp3>>



And you see this scene all around you.

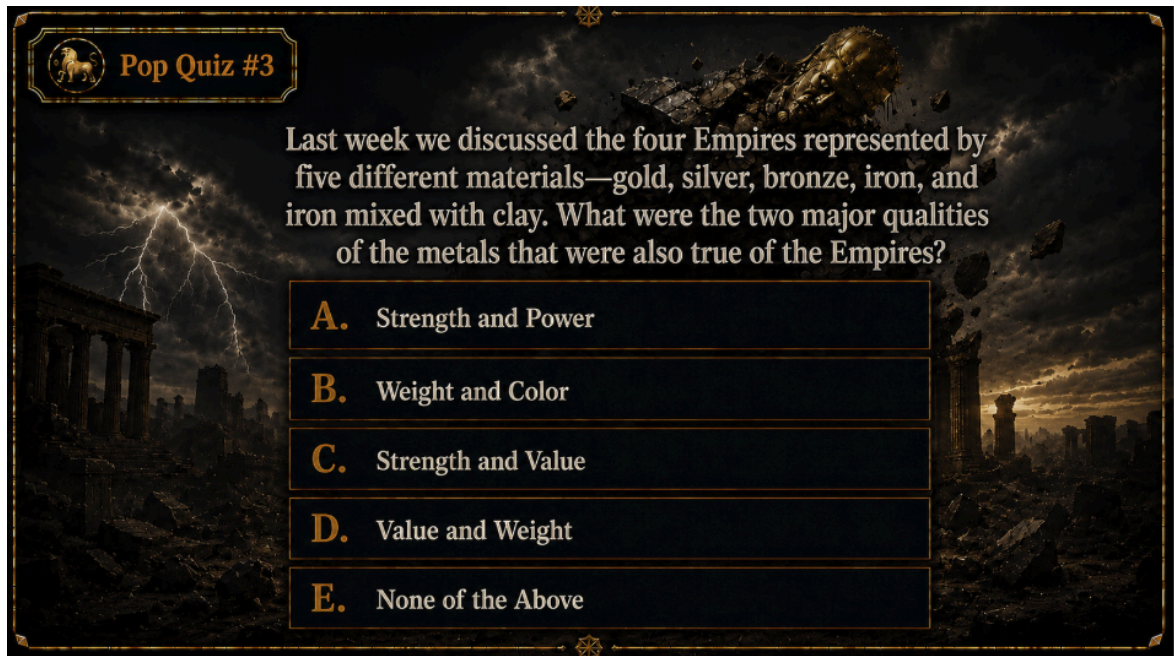
While this exact scene and music is not commonplace around the world,
this sound is:

<<Adhan - call to prayer - from Medina.mp3>>



And there are still people bowing at the sound before a demonic image.

The practice of worshipping an image is not less prevalent now—but more.



7: Verse 5 — "As Soon As": The Obelisk as a Timekeeping Device

Daniel 3:5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

This verse begins with the phrase "as soon as" — which might not seem particularly significant. But now that we understand what the obelisk does — it tells time — this phrase becomes more important.

Take a look at this dictionary definition:

(Do Not Read)

DANIEL 3:5

“AS SOON AS”

LN 67.38 בִּי בַּעֲתָּ בְּזִמָּן דִּי (b- 'id·dān ā-(') dī) *as soon as, when; a marker of a point of time roughly simultaneous with another point of time* (Da 3:5, 15+)

Swanson, J. (1997). (electronic ed.).
Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)*
(electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The Aramaic word here is *iddana* — a term referring to a marker of a point in time, roughly simultaneous with another point in time.

This is why these translations handled the verse differently as you can see on this slide:

(Do Not Read)

Translation Comparison of Daniel 3:5

YLT

Young's
Literal
Translation

Daniel 3:5 (YLT)

5 at the time that ye hear the voice of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackbut, the psaltery, the symphony, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and do obeisance to the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath raised up:

NKJV

New King
James
Version

Daniel 3:5 (NKJV)

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;

LEB

Lexham
English
Bible

Daniel 3:5 (LEB)

5 that at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, the drum and all kinds of music, you must fall down and you must worship the statue of gold that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

The YLT, NKJV, and LEB all render the phrase "at the time," highlighting that Daniel is referring to a specific point in time.

Here is a summary of 8 Aramaic Lexicons on the subject:

(Do Not Read)

Daniel 3:5 “As Soon As” in the Aramaic

Root Word Meaning
time; year

As soon as you hear the sound of the...

Part of Speech: noun, common, singular, determined + unmarked gender

Sense: moment (point) – a particular point in time.

LEXICON / SOURCE	DEFINITION
BDB	time
TDOT 16	time; year
HAL Aramaic	time; year
GHCLT	time; a year
WSOTDICT	time; years
DBL Aramaic	time; years
WAT	Zeit; Jahr; time; year
TgLex	set time; moment; time set for study of Law
LXHEBANLEX	time; year; an indefinite period; often marked by specific attributes or activities
AIS:C	
CDWGTB	
LXARCLEX	time; year

Time / year / a particular point in time / set time / moment / an indefinite period often marked by specific attributes or activities that take place within it.

If our earlier conclusion is correct—that the image functioned as an obelisk—then these repeated references to a specific point in time take on added significance. Rather than beginning whenever the musicians felt ready, the ceremony may have been coordinated around a designated time marker that was visible to the entire assembly.

Remember that Daniel has already gone out of his way to tell us the exact proportions of the monument. If those proportions are intentional—and we've argued they are—then it shouldn't surprise us that he also pays careful attention to the timing language surrounding the worship ceremony.

Such a system also fits well within Babylonian religion, where appointed times were commonly associated with acts of worship directed toward particular deities.

This is even more emphatic in **verse 15**: "**Now when**" is the same phrase with additional emphasis — pointing to a specific hour mark, a specific time mark that everyone in the provincial assembly knew corresponded to the worship of a particular deity. A working reading of the sentence might be: *"Now, when the particular point in time arrives, you will hear the musicians and you must bow down."*

Just to make sure you are capturing the imagery. Picture a giant obelisk crowned with a golden pinnacle, set up in honor of the Babylonian gods. As the sun moved across the sky, its shadow may have swept across zodiacal or astronomical markings on the pavement below, marking the appointed times of the ceremony. It may have had the achievements of Nebuchadnezzar inscribed upon it. If you are having trouble visualizing this, go look at the exact same pagan image now standing at the Vatican, or one of similar construction in Central Park. We are simply dealing with the daddy obelisk of the three.

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- 2: Introduction — The Thematic Flow and Our Proposed Timeline
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8: Verses 6-12 — The Accusation Against the Jews (Verses 6–12)

⁶ Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." ⁷ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁸ At this time some astrologers^b came forward and denounced the Jews.

Notice that the denunciation is against the entire people group called the Jews. Listen to what the word Denounced means:

(Do Not Read)

MALICIOUSLY ACCUSED:

literally *“ate (or chewed up the pieces of.”*

This idiomatic expression seems to carry the idea of spiteful slander as well as accusation, as the RSV rendering shows.

René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 189.



*Maliciously accused: literally “ate (or chewed up) the pieces of.”
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René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 189.

Remember that the three Jews are actually disobeying the laws of the land, yet the accusations against them are still seen as wicked and spiteful. I am sure their accusers tried to present themselves as logical people simply following a "Babylon first" ideology, yet the Scripture sees straight through any guise of nobility and calls these accusations for what they are, slander. This is an important lesson for our day and age as those who hate Israel are coming up with increasingly polished arguments to slanderously accuse the Jews with. We must have the mind of Christ to see the accusations for what they really are; malicious attacks of the enemy.

It is worth noting that the Jews always have and always will be hated by many until Christ returns. This is because, there is only one people group on the planet to whom Adonai entrusted His word — the Jewish people. This awesome endowment also came with satanic oppression from the surrounding nations.

- **Psalm 147:19–20 (ESV)**

19 He declares his word to Jacob,
his statutes and rules to Israel.

20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his rules.

Praise the LORD!

Consider Deuteronomy 4:15–20. The Lord revealed Himself to Moses in a bush that could not be consumed by fire, and revealed Himself to the entire nation at once at Horeb, speaking from fire. What follows immediately is a warning: *"Therefore watch yourselves very carefully."*

Jews have never been permitted to indulge in the kind of idolatry the surrounding nations swim in. When Jews do fall into that behavior, they are disciplined by God. When they do not — they are hated by the surrounding nations. One might adapt a saying from our time: *"Blessed if they do, and blessed if they don't"* — disciplined by the Lord on the one hand (which is a blessing), and persecuted by the nations on the other (which is also, as we will see, ultimately a blessing).

- **Deuteronomy 4:16–19 (ESV)**

16 beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 19 And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

From the Tower of Babel forward, all the nations participated in these kinds of events — but one nation was blessed with the Law and claimed as a peculiar people for the Lord Himself. They were not to do these things.

- **Deuteronomy 4:20 (ESV)**

20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

The obelisk — the very form of Nebuchadnezzar's gold image — originated in Egypt. And God said: I brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt to be a distinct people. The Jews living in Babylon at this point were apparently living in loving obedience to the Torah. They are the good figs Jeremiah told us about. They recognized that they had been delivered from the furnace of Egypt to be a distinct people and were determined to live up to their holy calling.

About 125 years before the events of Daniel 3, Isaiah had given the nation of Israel this prophecy:

o **Isaiah 43:2–3 (ESV)**

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Isaiah understood what the Law had already made clear: Israel would always be a distinct people, set apart by God, and therefore often hated by the nations. He knew that God's people would walk through the fire again, so he spoke to them ahead of time with both warning and promise. The Law had already shown this pattern when Israel passed through the furnace of Egypt and was delivered by the mighty hand of God. The Prophets then looked ahead and warned Israel to remain faithful when the flames of trial came again. And tonight, in Daniel — in the Writings — we see that faithfulness embodied in a real historical moment. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah show us how God's people are to stand when the empire commands compromise, when the fire is real, and when obedience may

cost everything. The Word of God truly gives us what we need for every trial we will ever face.

Let's read one more passage from the Writings to confirm that this is and always will be the pattern. The book of Esther takes place *after* the events in Daniel:

- **Esther 3:8–9 (ESV)**

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. 9 If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries."

The basis for hatred of the Jews is always the same. The nations hate a people who keep themselves *qodesh* — holy, separate, distinct. The nations will not tolerate the existence of a people whose distinctness comes from trust-grounded obedience to the Tanakh. This hatred is wicked, but it is also a manifestation of jealousy. The wise men of Babylon were jealous of the Jews who could interpret dreams, maintain their distinction, and walk closely with their God.

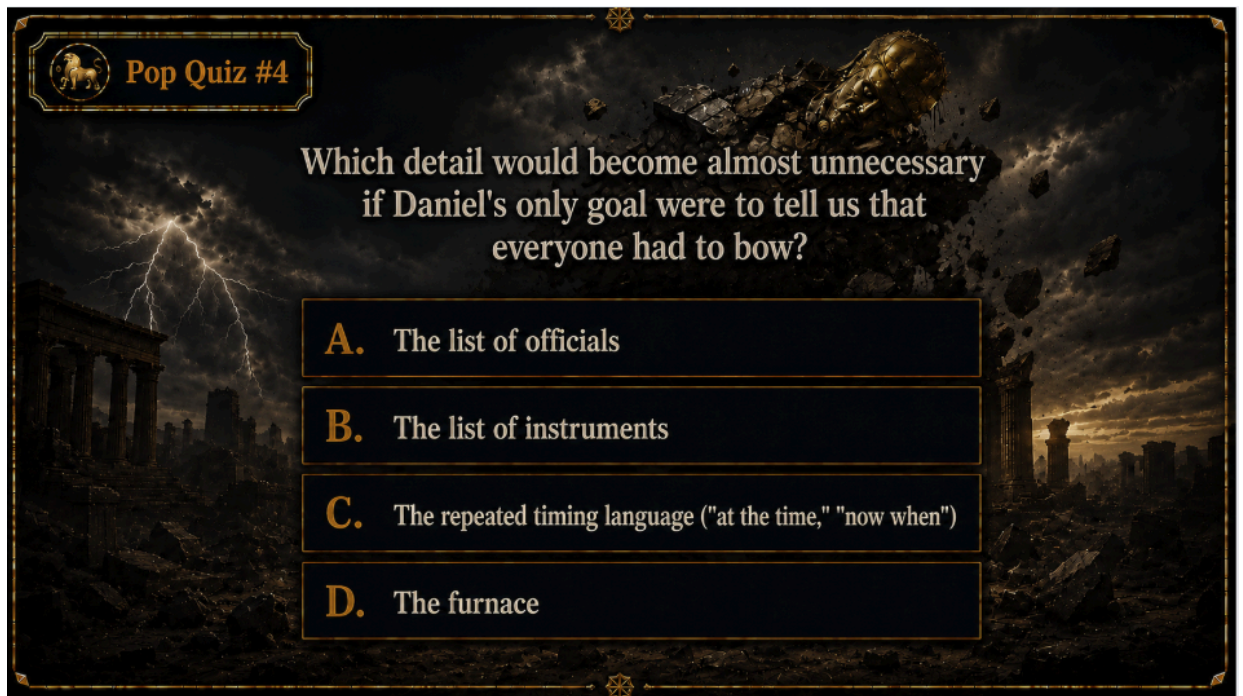
As we prepare to get back into Daniel, ask yourselves: what kind of people ought you to be? This is not an "Old Testament thing." Look at the Sermon on the Mount:

- **Matthew 5:11–12 (ESV)**

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus is reminding Israel — and all who belong to the God of Israel — that this is going to be a repeating pattern. You are still going to have a life that

includes insults and persecutions and false accusations. But what are you supposed to do? Rejoice. You are blessed.



⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹² But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon-Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Now, the accusation was initially leveled against the entire ethnic group — the Jews. Why then is it narrowed specifically to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in verses 9–12? Because they were men in positions of power over which the other wise men in the province were jealous. Their accusation was as much about position as it was about theology.

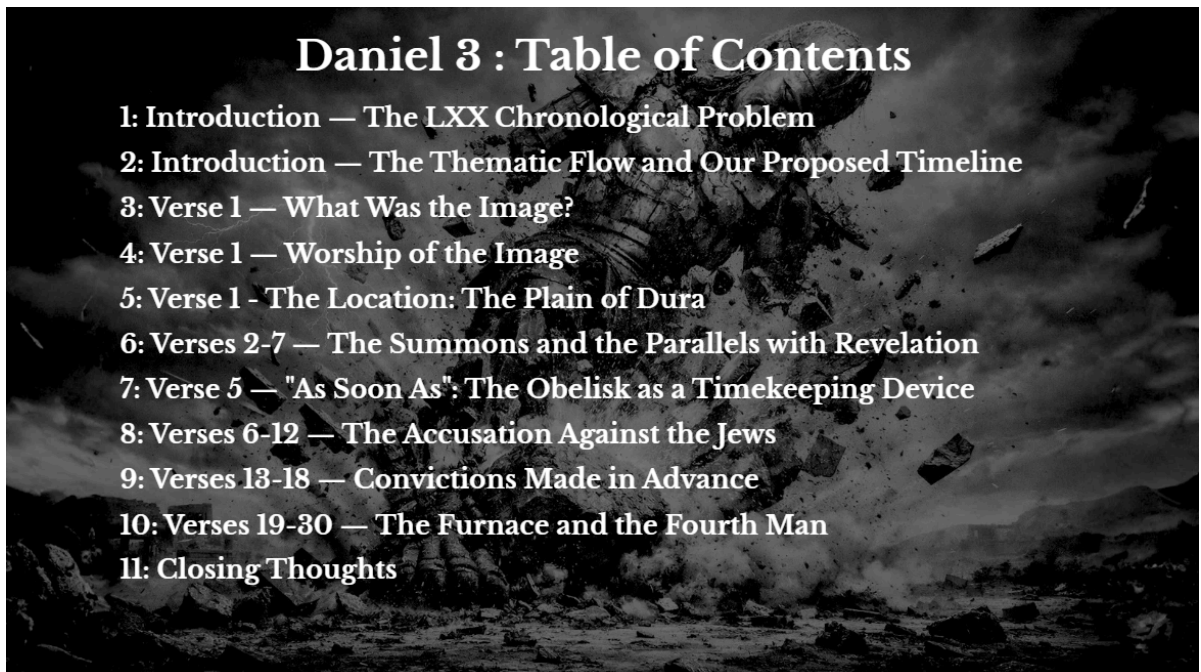
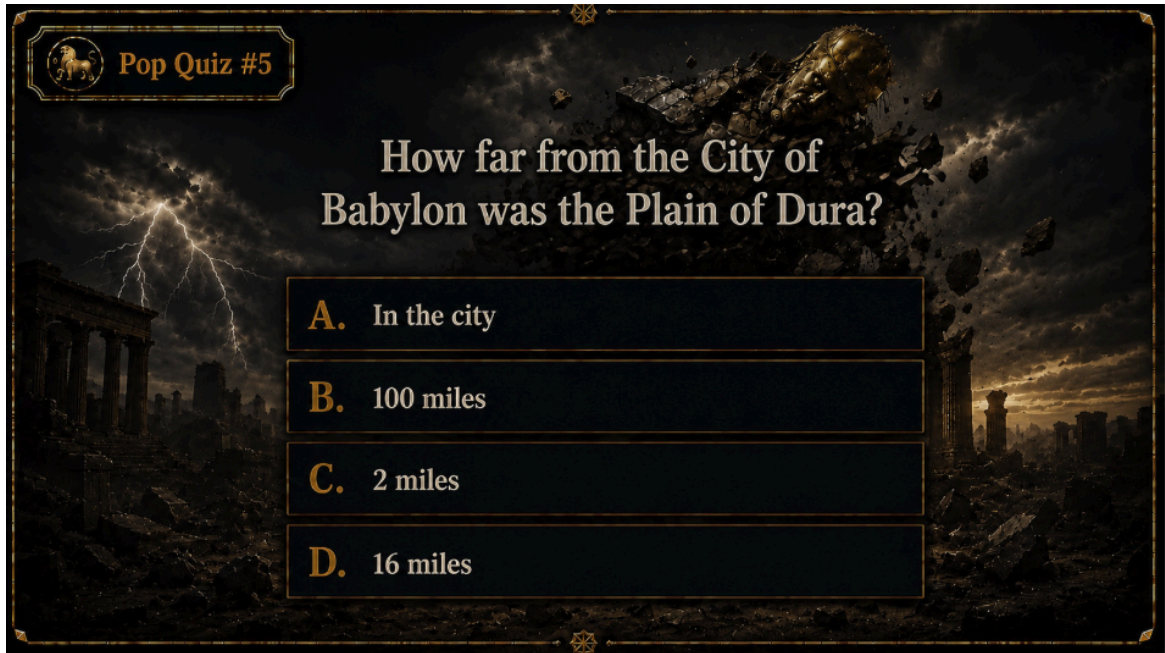
Notice here that the men need to inform Nebuchadnezzar that these three Jews do not worship the image. If everyone is standing around the statue together while this is happening, why then would they need to inform the king of their refusal to bow?

One potential is that there were too many people gathered for them all to be seen because the scene was so sprawling. Consider for a minute just how many leaders would need to be gathered.



Based on the Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Babylonian empire spanned all the way from the Persian gulf to the Mediterranean and expanded North all the way into central Turkey. It is very possible that there were many thousands of leaders gathered. Truly this was an epic gathering that God chose to intentionally use to show the dedication of these good figs.



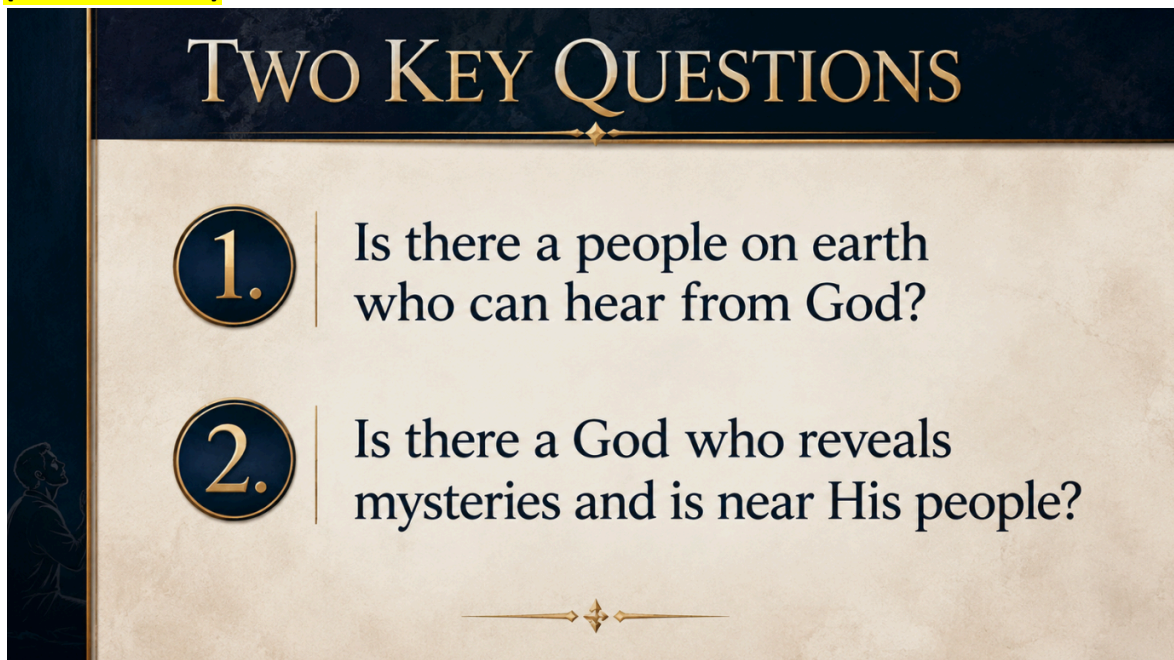
9: Verses 13-18 — Convictions Made in Advance

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I

have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

In our last session covering Daniel 2, you may remember that the scenario raised two key questions:

(Do Not Read)



- *Is there a people on earth that can hear from God?*
- *Is there a people on earth that God lives among?*

Daniel 2 answered both — it was the Jewish people who could hear from God, and upon whom God's presence rested.

Tonight's text raises one key question — Nebuchadnezzar himself asked it: "*Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?*"

We are 2600 years beyond this event. Believers everywhere have had that much time to think about how they would answer this question—few have ever been put into such a situation. These three young Jewish men had

only moments to answer the question. How difficult do decisions become when you do not have time to contemplate them?

Some decisions must be made in advance of the question. That is called having convictions.

Listen to what C.T. Studd said on convictions made in advance:

(Do Not Read)



"Difficulties, dangers, disease, death, or divisions don't deter any but Chocolate Soldiers from executing God's Will. When someone says there is a lion in the way, the real Christian promptly replies, 'That's hardly enough inducement for me; I want a bear or two besides to make it worth my while to go.'"

— C.T. Studd —



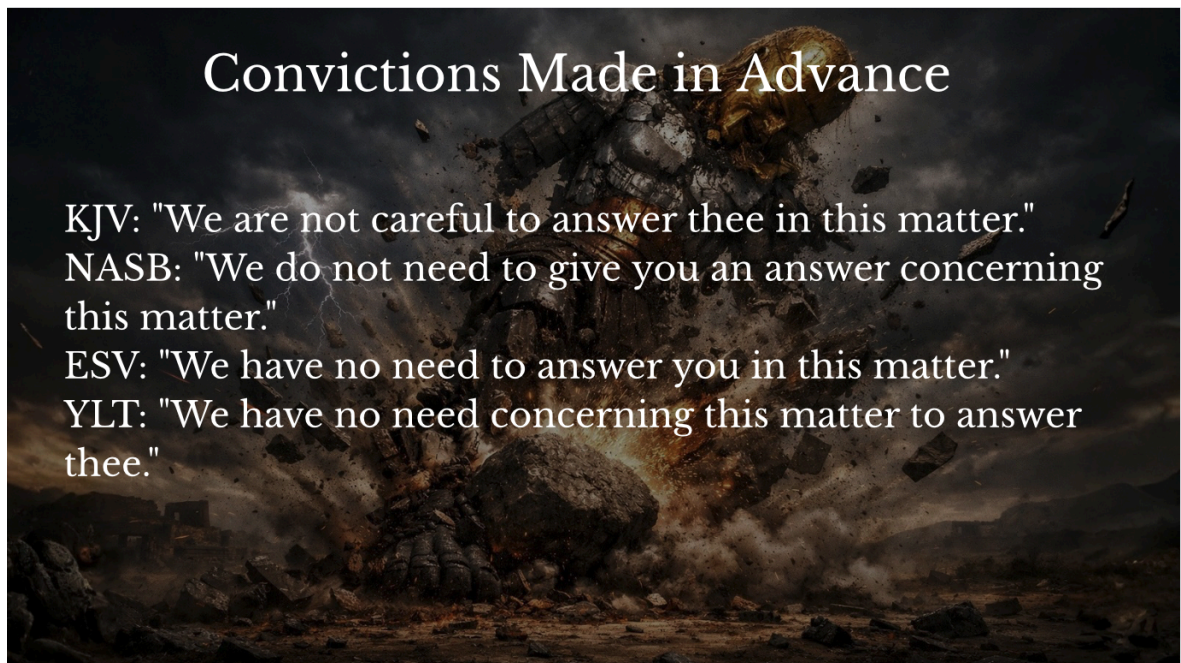
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Notice also what verse 13 reveals: Nebuchadnezzar does not immediately execute them when they are brought before him. Though the herald had proclaimed immediate execution for non-compliance, Nebuchadnezzar instead questions them and offers an opportunity to comply. This may be a subtle hint — but it is possible that Nebuchadnezzar's experience with these specific men in Daniel 2 is at work. They have history. Next week we will talk not about the seven years of Jacob's trouble, but about the seven

years of Nebuchadnezzar's trouble — and the beautiful picture hidden in all of these ugly circumstances regarding God's ability to bring all men to the same conclusion.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

We want to share verse 16 from several translations, because we cannot get enough of this statement — and because the translations together give you more appreciation for the level of conviction already present in these men before this situation arose:



- o **KJV:** *"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter."* — They did not need to take special care or careful consideration in their answer. Their minds had been made up by the Word of God long in advance of this day.

- **NASB:** *"We do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter."* — They might not have felt the need to respond at all. This is tantamount to saying: "Do your worst. Our actions are our answer."
- **ESV:** *"We have no need to answer you in this matter."* — They might have been saying: "We have no need — but since you do have a need, here is what we have to say."
- **YLT:** *"We have no need concerning this matter to answer thee."* — There are no needs on our part that might make any of this negotiable. You have nothing we want or care for.

Whatever the particular shade of meaning, we love their answer. Notice also that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were acting in complete unity with what the Messiah would tell His people 600 years later:

- **Matthew 10:16–20 (NIV)**
 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

This is the level of conviction and courage necessary in all who worship the God of Israel and bear the name of Christ. This courage is rare in modern days but was commonplace in the Word of God. It is unknown to most, but there is another story from Jewish history that resembles this one and poses the same daring challenge to believers—it comes from the book of Jasher. We do not have time to fully detail the book of Jasher and its importance and origins, but suffice it to say it is important to the Jewish people. This story comes from Genesis Rabbah and it details a story of none other than Abram. (We are going to provide a summary for times sake) - link to the full text can be found within our notes).

<https://sacred-texts.com/chr/apo/jasher/12.htm>



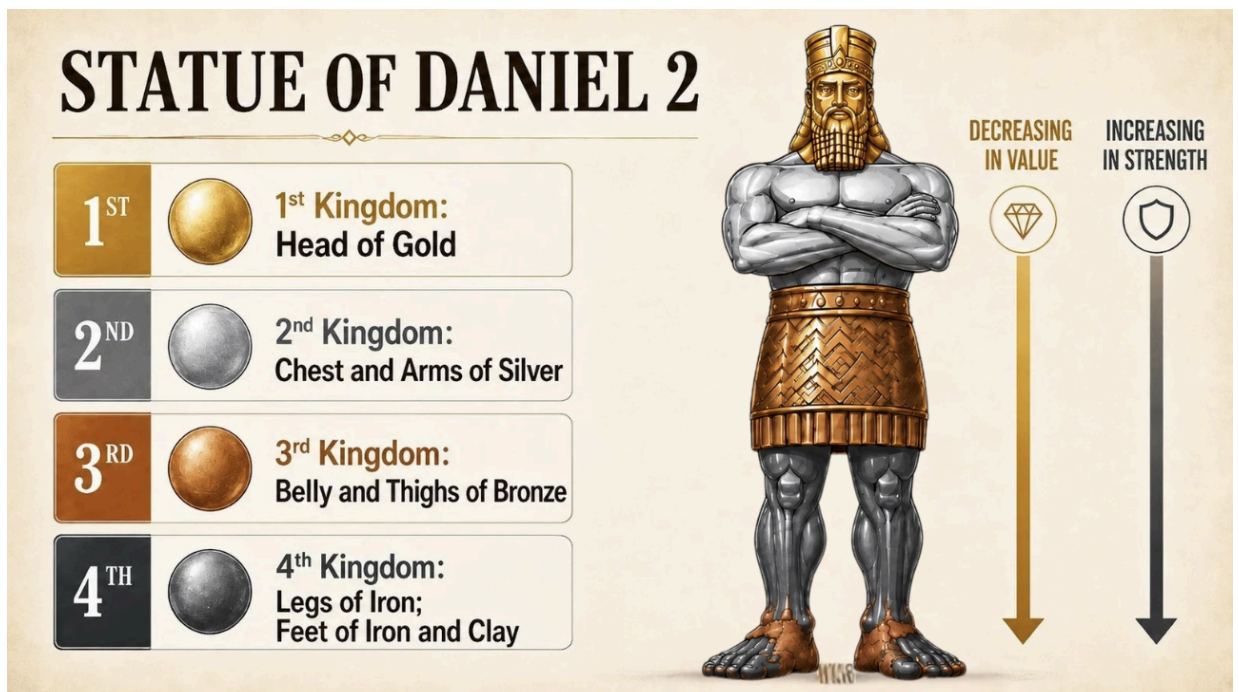
Abram is fifty years old when he walks into his father's house and finds it full of idols — Terah's own trade. Abram takes a hatchet and destroys every idol but the largest, leaving the hatchet in its hand, then tells Terah the big idol got angry and smashed the rest (Jasher 11:50-61).

Brought before Nimrod, Abram doesn't back down — he tells the king to his face that his gods are worthless and that he's led the whole land into sin. The sages rule this a capital offense: Abram must be burned (Jasher 12:1-6). Terah, trying to save himself, lies to Nimrod and blames his other son Haran for putting Abram up to it — so Haran is condemned as well (Jasher 12:11-20).

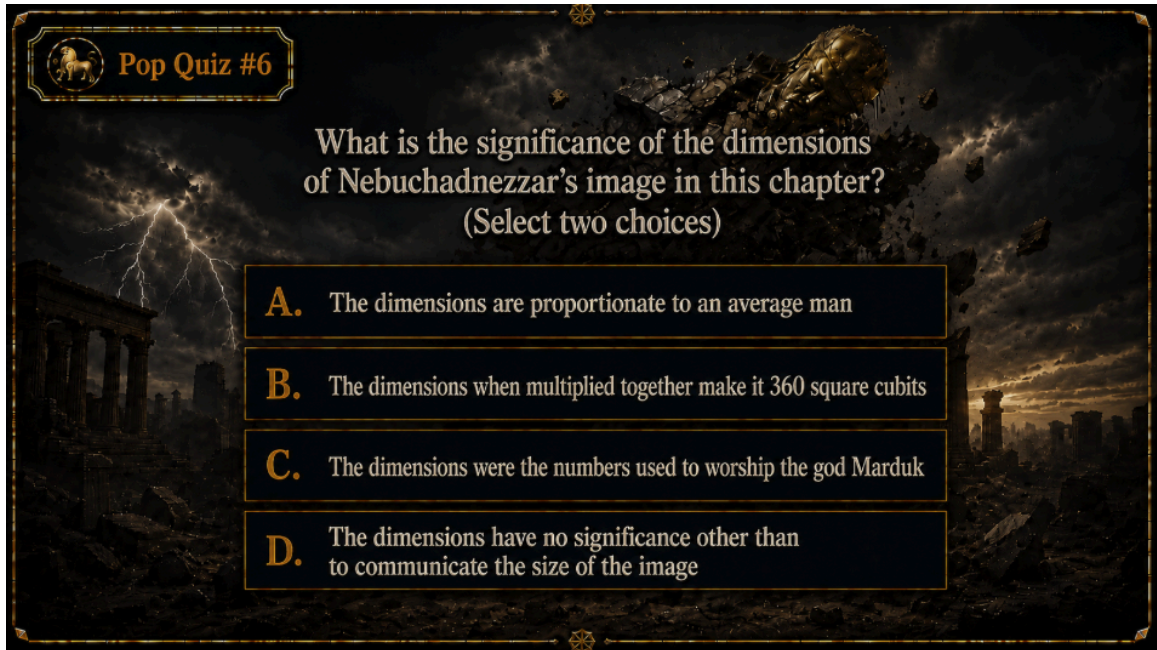
Then the furnace: nine hundred thousand people gather to watch, a fire burns three days and nights to prepare it, and Abram and Haran are bound and cast in (Jasher 12:6-23). Haran dies instantly, "for his heart was not perfect with the Lord." Abram doesn't — the cords burn off him and he simply walks in the fire, unharmed, for three days. When guards try to pull him out, the flames reach out and kill them instead (Jasher 12:24-31). Finally Nimrod himself calls Abram out by name, and when Abram emerges untouched, the king and the whole crowd bow down to him. Abram's reply

is the point of the story: don't bow to me — bow to Adonai. (Jasher 12:32-38).

We are not here to comment on the historical veracity of this story. Instead, its worth noting that this level of conviction and courage is what has marked the Jewish people for centuries, and Gentiles everywhere must respond in like fashion. We must reflect the courage of these Hebrews in Babylon in our current culture and anywhere we go across the globe.



As brutal as some of the actions are in this chapter at the hands of Babylon—Babylon is still compared to Gold while the final Empire is compared to iron. This should inform us to the level of brutality and idolatrous demands that will be made in the future. The time is now to build convictions that can withstand the fires of confusions.



10: Verses 19-30 — The Furnace and the Fourth Man

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

This is the second time in our text that Nebuchadnezzar is said to be "furious" (vv. 13 and 19). As a military strategy, sending your strongest soldiers to the edge of a furnace heated seven times its normal temperature is the fastest way to lose your best men.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men

walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

You have heard many sermons on this subject, so we will not belabor the point. However: it is Nebuchadnezzar who sees the fourth man in the fire. This Gentile king has now experienced divine revelation through dreams and has seen an angel with his own eyes.

It is also worth noting what Nebuchadnezzar does not do in the verses that follow: he does not call for the angel to come out of the fire. He calls only to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The angel stays. If we had unlimited time, we would tell you all the ways the Jewish nation has acted as a mediator between Gentiles and God — and we would tell you that the King of the Jewish nation is the sole personification of that role (1 Timothy 2:5). But that is for another night.

Despite this, it would be erroneous to place Jesus of Nazareth as the fourth man in the furnace. Is it a common Christian blunder to associate anything that has to do with the phrase "sons of the gods" and immediately think its Jesus in the flesh.

Instead—these instances are shadow's and types of what Christ will be. We have seen a figure like this before in our studies. Here in the aramaic he is *bar elahin* (*son of the gods*) but in Hebrew a similar figure is called *malakh YHWH*.

(DO NOT READ)

THE ANGEL OF THEOPHANY

This angel is spoken of as "the angel of Yahweh," and "the angel of the presence (or face) of Yahweh." The following passages contain references to this angel: **Gen 16:7** ff-the angel and Hagar; **Gen 18** - Abraham intercedes with the angel for Sodom; **Gen 22:11** ff-the angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac; **Gen 24:7,40** - Abraham sends Eliezer and promises the angel's protection; **Gen 31:11** ff-the angel who appears to Jacob says "I am the God of Beth-el"; **Gen 32:24** ff-Jacob wrestles with the angel and says, "I have seen God face to face"; **Gen 48:15** f-Jacob speaks of God and the angel as identical; **Ex 3** (compare **Acts 7:30** ff) - the angel appears to Moses in the burning bush; **Ex 13:21; 14:19** (compare **Num 20:16**) - God or the angel leads Israel out of Egypt; **Ex 23:20** ff-the people are commanded to obey the angel; **Ex 32:34-33:17** (compare **Isa 63:9**) - Moses pleads for the presence of God with His people; **Josh 5:13-6:2** - the angel appears to Joshua; **Judg 2:1-5** - the angel speaks to the people; **Judg 6:11** ff-the angel appears to Gideon.

A study of these passages shows that while the angel and Yahweh are at times distinguished from each other, they are with equal frequency, and in the same passages, merged into each other. How is this to be explained? It is obvious that these apparitions cannot be the Almighty Himself, whom no man hath seen, or can see.

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Because of his association with YHWH himself, many have come to call him "The Angel of the Theophany". Let's look at another example of this angel.

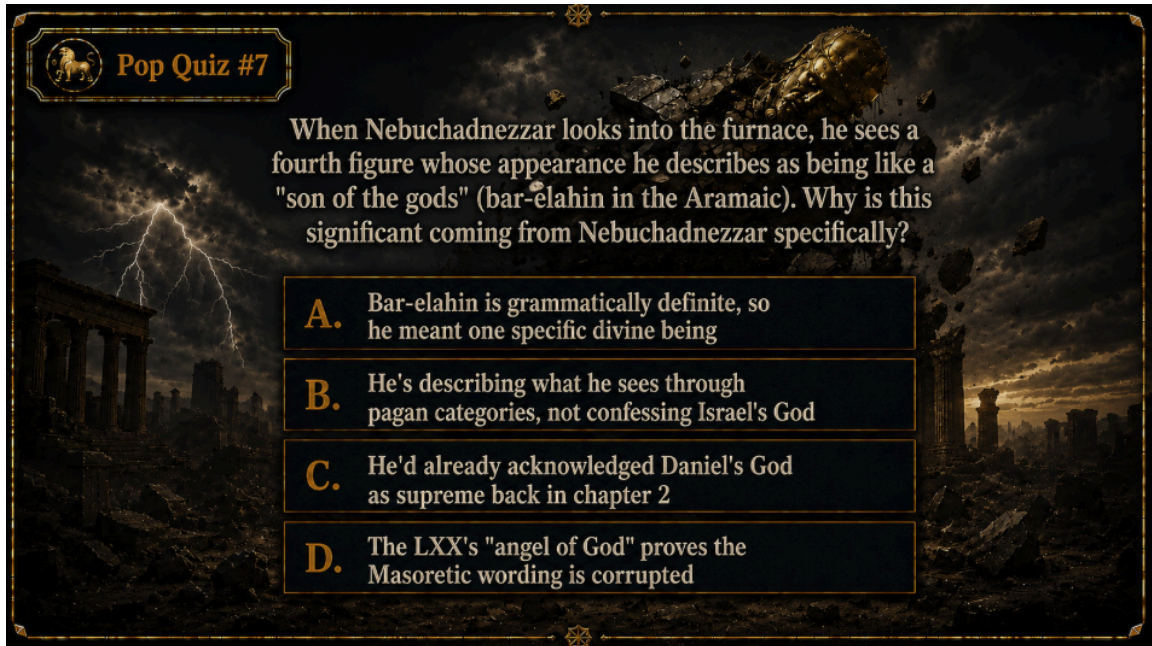
- o **Exodus 3:2 (ESV)**

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

The angel of the Lord has revealed himself to Israel for generations and protected them in flames since the nations beginning. Now, because of their courage and conviction these three Hebrew youths stand shoulder to shoulder with a divine being, potentially the Angel of YHWH himself!

This figure is not Jesus—but he points to Jesus. The angel of YHWH appears to be a man but is also of a cosmic origin—the same is with Christ who did not merely appear to be a man, he *was* as man and also came from heaven (John 3:13).

Yeshua will ultimately deliver Israel from the final furnace of affliction at the hands of mystery Babylon. And one day every knee will bow to Him when he is crowned the King of Glory before the whole cosmos.



Pop Quiz #7

When Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace, he sees a fourth figure whose appearance he describes as being like a "son of the gods" (bar-elahin in the Aramaic). Why is this significant coming from Nebuchadnezzar specifically?

- A.** Bar-elahin is grammatically definite, so he meant one specific divine being
- B.** He's describing what he sees through pagan categories, not confessing Israel's God
- C.** He'd already acknowledged Daniel's God as supreme back in chapter 2
- D.** The LXX's "angel of God" proves the Masoretic wording is corrupted

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

It is slightly humorous that in verses 8–12, it was specifically the Chaldean astrologers who leveled the accusation against the Jews. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego come out of the fire, the astrologers are nowhere to be found. When they realized that God had vindicated the Jews despite their accusations, they found somewhere else to be — like the accusers in John 8 who dropped their stones and left. The Accuser is dismissed.

What does it speak to you that the Babylonians all saw this deliverance and crowded around the Jews in admiration? How many supernatural deliverances has Israel experienced from 1948 to the present — and yet many Christians do not crowd around them in admiration? The world at large sees them fighting for the land God told them to hold, being supernaturally delivered, and responds with condemnation. You might find more to respect in the Babylonian officials than in the UN.

Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar used a specific term to refer to these three men: "*servants of the Most High God.*" This is a dramatic proclamation given that he is standing at or near the very obelisk he had dedicated to exalting the Babylonian gods. This was his symbol of power, his symbol of divine right to rule — and yet he declares: these men serve the Most High God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

From Nebuchadnezzar's own mouth: the core issue was that whatever they were being asked to do constituted worship of Babylonian gods — and he respects them for not doing it, once he sees God is with them. Those who were jealous of their position and leveled the accusation against them now see these men promoted even higher.

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11: Closing Thoughts

The standout stars of this chapter are the three Jewish men who honored their God by honoring what the Tanakh says. They did it in the most difficult circumstances and were an extraordinary witness to the world around them. This chapter ends in almost exactly the same way as chapter 2 — different circumstances, equally lethal, and yet the Jewish remnant acted honorably and was an extraordinary witness to the gentile world around them.

If you have not noticed it yet, this book — Daniel — is about Israel becoming all that Adonai has destined Israel to become. We are strengthened and encouraged by Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah because they show us what is possible for Jewish men who love the Tanakh.

The writer of Hebrews lifted these men as an example for all of the faithful:

- **Hebrews 11:34 (ESV)**

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

These are not supermen. They are ordinary men who, as Hebrews states, were made strong out of weakness. This strength came as they showed their love for an extraordinary God and clung to an extraordinary book.

In our final thoughts, we ask you: what kind of people ought you to be?

- **Philippians 1:18b–28 (ESV)**

Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is

to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

Imagine that Daniel is writing this passage from the royal palace to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the provincial areas. *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.* That is precisely what they did.

But the passage was not written by Daniel. It was written by Paul — and he was not writing to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He was writing to you.

Will you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one person for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you? Men like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did this long before you even knew there was a God — and you are strengthened by their examples and filled with the almighty Spirit of holiness from God. How much more, then, should be required of you?

As you begin to put together everything you've heard tonight—and correct the timeline—you realize that these three Hebrew men of royal descent were likely in their early 20s, not mid 30s or beyond. That should inspire us. It should also challenge us. Convictions like theirs are not formed in the moment of crisis; they are established long beforehand. We must establish those convictions now, because the days ahead will require us to live them out. And it is both our joy and our privilege to do so.

Appendix: Nebuchadnezzar Chronicles Tablet Transcript:

[The twenty-fir]st [year], the king of Akkad (remained) in his country. Nebuchadnezzar, his eldest son, the crown [pri]nce, [mu]stered [the army of Akkad], took the leadership of his troops, marched on Car[che]miš on the bank of the Euphrates, crossed the river [to meet the army of Mišir], which had its quarters in Carchemiš, and [joined battle with it]. They fought, and the army of Mišir beat a retreat before him; he [de]feated and destroyed it until it was completely annihilated. The Akkadian troops overtook the survivors of the army of Mi[šir who] had escaped the defeat and whom the weapons had not reached and [deci]mated them in the district of Ḥamath. Not one man [returned] to his country. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the entire country of Ḥa[ma]th. Nabopolassar reigned twenty-one years over Babylon. In the month of Ab, the eighth day, he went to his destiny. In the month of Elul, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, and in the month of Elul, the first day, he ascended the royal throne of Babylon.

In the year of his accession, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Ḥatti. Until the month of Šebat he traveled through Ḥatti victoriously. In the month of Šebat, he carried Ḥatti's massive tribute to Babylon. In the month of Nisan, he took the hand of Bēl and of the son of Bēl and celebrated the New Year's festival.

The first year (of the reign) of Nebuchadnezzar, in the month of Siwan, he mustered his troops and marched on Ḥatti. Until the month of Kislev he traveled through Ḥatti victoriously. All the kings of Ḥatti came into his presence, and he received their massive tribute. He marched on Aškelôn; he took it in the month of Kislev, seized its king, pillaged and [plu]ndered it. He reduced the city to a heap of rubble. In the month of Šebat, he set forth and [went back] to Bab[ylon].

[The seco]nd [year], in the month of Iyyar, the king of Akkad strengthened his powerful army and [marched on Ḥatti]. He set up his quarters at [...]. He made cross [...] large siege towers. [...] from the month of] Iyyar to the month of [...], he traveled through Ḥatti victoriously].

(...)

[... he lef]t (?) and [returned to Babylon (?)].

[The third year, in the month of ..., the] thirteenth day, Nabû-Šuma-līšir [... In the month of ..., the king of Akk]ad mustered his troops and [marched] on Ḫatti. He caused [the] vast [... and booty (?)] from Ḫatti to be br[o]ug[ht] to Akkad.

The fourth [ye]ar, the king of Akkad mustered his troops and marched on Ḫatti. [He traveled] through Ḫatti victor[iously]. In the month of Kislev, he took leadership of his troops and marched on Mišir. Having learned of it, the king of Mišir muster[ed] his troops, [and] they joined in a pitched battle. They both inflicted heavy losses. The king of Akkad turned back with his troops and [went back] to Babylon.

The fifth year, the king of Akkad (remained) in his country. He strengthened his numerous chariotry and cavalry.

The sixth year, in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops and marched on Ḫatti. From Ḫatti, he dispatched his troops, and they went in the direction of the desert. They carried away astonishing riches, cattle and the gods of the many Arabs. In the month of Adar the king returned to his country.

The seventh year, in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched on Ḫatti, and set up his quarters facing the city of Yeḫud. In the month of Adar, the second day, he took the city and captured the king. He installed there a king of his choice. He colle[cted] its massive tribute and went back to Babylon.

[The eighth] year, [in the mon]th of Ṭebeth, the king of Akkad [marched] on Ḫatti as far as Carchemiš. [...] he [...] not [...]. In the month of Šebat, [the king] we[nt back to] his own country.

The ninth year, [in the month of ..., the king of Akk]ad and [his] troops [moved] along the bank of the Tigris. The king of E[lam (?) ...]. The king of Akkad [...]. He set up his camp [at ...] on the bank of the Tigris. [It was] a

day's journey between them. The king of Elam became frightened, and, fear having gripped him, he w[ent back] to his own country.

[The] ten[th year, the king of Akk]ad (remained) in his country. From the month of Kislev to the month of Tebeth [there was] an uprising in Akkad [...]. He executed many of his [troops], captured his adversary. [Later], he marched on Hatti; [all] the kings of (!) [H]atti cam[e [int]o [his presence, (and) he received] their massive tribute [and] went back [to] Ba[bylon].

[The eleven]th [year], in the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad [mustered his] troops and marched [on] Hatti.

Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, ed. Benjamin R. Foster, vol. 19, *Writings from the Ancient World* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 227–231.