3.3 - Daniel 3

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3.3.1 - Daniel 3:1

Many of the passages in the book of Daniel concern prophecy. Yet the book also reveals the way people of God should live within governments and cultures ignorant of or antagonistic to the principles of God:

> Daniel is a wisdom book, it wasn't written to be included in the book of the Prophets but in the Wisdom section of the Old Testament. Therefore it is designed not simply to tell us about the future, although there are many prophecies in Daniel, it is primarily written to teach us how to live in the midst of paganism, how to live in the midst of a hostile environment. . . . We are surrounded by the cosmic system, many of you work in environments where there are policies in place that are somewhat antagonistic to the Word of God, some more so and some less so. So you have to deal with the issue in a very practical way of when do I take a stand for the Word; when am I pushed into a position where I have to compromise and I have to make decisions to get along and when do I take my stand and make an issue out of Christianity even if it might cost me my job or my career.[2]

> The second chapter showed the final outcome of the growth and the success of the world power—the world power must crumble. Yet while its power lasts, must the kingdoms of this world not be feared by God's own because of the harm these enemies can and will do to God's saints? This chapter gives the answer, "No"; He that is with us is greater than he that is with them.[3]

In the third chapter of Daniel, the main theme concerns the response of Daniel's companions when Nebuchadnezzar requires all leaders within his realm to bow down and worship an image. The events of the chapter concern this central question: How should the people of God respond when the law of the land violates God's law? Here, we encounter the biblical principle of higher law which asserts a government may not legitimately enact a law violating God's law, as set forth in the Old and New Testaments.

This chapter raises a number of important questions:

- When Nebuchadnezzar issues a decree contradicting God's law regarding the worship of idols (Ex. 20:4-5; Lev. 26:1), how are the Jews to respond?

- What risks must the Jews be willing to face to remain faithful to God?
- Will God always intervene to rescue His people from their plight, as He does in this chapter for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego?

The Golden Image

As important as the answers to these questions are for believers of every age, we must also recognize the role this chapter plays in the book's overall theme.

> Chapter 2 gives us the times of the Gentiles; chapter 3 tells how he's going to preserve Israel even during the times of the Gentiles. So the times of the Gentiles is for Israel a fiery furnace experience but chapter 3 says He's going to deliver Israel so that it is a promise, it's a comfort, it's an assurance to a people who have been delivered over to the Gentiles that God has not forgotten His covenants.[4]

> Daniel and his Godly companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were historical characters; but they were also *a type of the nation of Israel*—the nation to which they belong. The experience of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace and the experience of Daniel in the lions' den typify the history of Israel during the time of the Gentiles, the reign of Antichrist, the time of Jacob's trouble, when the devil will make his last all-out *but futile*, drive to annihilate Israel.[5]

See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

an image of gold

Image is צֶלֶם [*ṣelēm*], the same word described the *image* Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream in Daniel 2. The LXX renders צֶלֶם [*ṣelēm*] as εἰκόνα [*eikona*], the same word used in the Greek NT for the *image* of the beast from the sea, the Antichrist, which all the world is forced to worship at the time of the end (Rev. 13:14-15).

Several questions arise: (1) When did Nebuchadnezzar erect the golden image? (2) Why did Nebuchadnezzar erect the golden image? (3) What did the golden image represent?

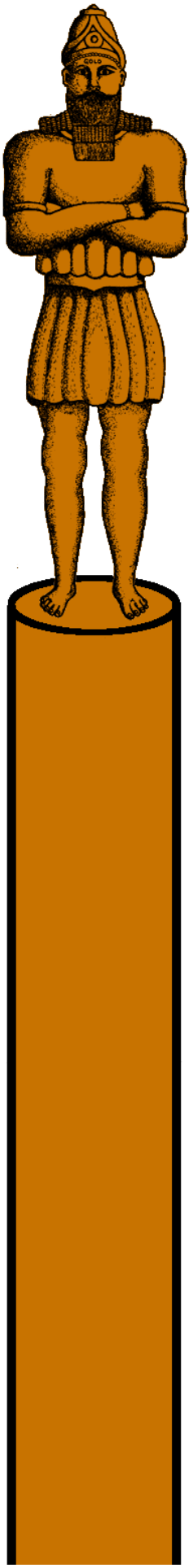
Scripture does not provide a specific chronological indicator concerning when the events of chapter 3 transpired. However, when Nebuchadnezzar's actions in this chapter are considered in light of previous chapter's closing verses wherein Nebuchadnezzar proclaims, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings" (Dan. 2:48), a considerable time must have elapsed such that Nebuchadnezzar's view of Daniel's God had changed significantly:[6]

> It is impossible to determine the time with certainty; but allowing the shortest-mentioned period as the interval between the interpretation of the dream Dan. 2 and the erection of this statue, the time would be sufficient to account for the fact that the impression made by that event on the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, in favor of the claims of the true God Dan. 2:46-47, seems to have been entirely effaced.[7]

> If the illness began a year after the dream (Dan. 4:29) and the illness lasted probably seven years (v. 32), and if an interval of time was needed for Nebuchadnezzar's reign after his cure (at least a year?), then the dream must have taken place no later than the thirty-fourth year of his reign (i.e., *ca*. 571 BC).[8]

Some commentators believe Nebuchadnezzar erected the image in response to an attempted revolt in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar invited his vassal kings to Babylon to

force a show of loyalty, as recorded in Daniel 3. They believe Zedekiah was one of the vassal kings who traveled to Babylon in his fourth year:[9]



> During the first half of his fourth (non-accession) year as king (Tishri 595 - Adar 594 B.C.), Zedekiah apparently made a trip to Babylon (Jer. 51:59-64). Perhaps this trip was demanded by Nebuchadnezzar to impress upon Zedekiah and other vassal kings that they were to be loyal Babylonian clients. However, it appears to have had the opposite effect, since later that year, before the end of the month of Av (August) 594 B.C., Zedekiah, having returned to Jerusalem, plotted with the emissaries from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah advised against this rebellion (Jer 27). This sequence of events yields a date of some time from Tishri (October) 595 B.C. to July 594 B.C. for Zedekiah's trip to Babylon and his return and, therefore, also for the events of Dan 3. The convocation in Dan 3 is likely the setting for the occasion of Zedekiah's trip since the trip was probably for the purpose of securing Zedekiah's loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dan. 3:3-7).[10]

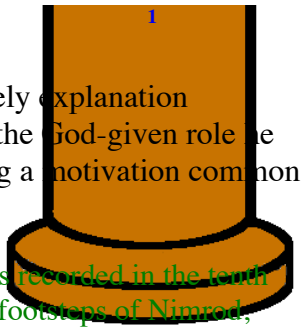
> Seraiah went to Babylon with Zedekiah … in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. Why did Zedekiah make a trip to Babylon in 594-593 B.C.? William Shea offers strong evidence to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his vassal kings to Babylon in 594 B.C. to insure their loyalty after an attempted revolt in Babylon a little less than a year earlier. Shea believes that this gathering was recorded in Daniel 3 (William H. Shea, "Daniel 3: Extra-Biblical Tests and the Convocation on the Plain of Dura," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20. Spring 1982:29-52).[11]

Others place the events following Nebuchadnezzar's final overthrow and destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Since ancient cultures considered their fortune in war as an indication of power of their patron deities, it may be that Nebuchadnezzar's amazement of the Jewish God, as recorded in chapter 2, had eroded in the subsequent events leading to Babylon's final destruction of Jerusalem. Having destroyed God's house (the temple) and burned the city, Nebuchadnezzar may have interpreted his overthrow of Jerusalem as an indication of the weakness of Israel's God.

> An appropriate date for the events of this chapter would . . . be about 585 B.C., just after Jerusalem had been destroyed and the God of Israel presumably defeated and discredited.[12]

> When did he do this? It cannot be important to know the time, otherwise Daniel would have recorded it. The Greek translators venture a guess when they insert at this point "in the eighteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar." This strikes pretty close to the year of the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 25:8) and is a supposition which is apparently based on the idea that the sack of Jerusalem and the overthrow of Judah particularly inspired the king to this act of reverence to his gods. However, Judah belonged to the smaller fry among the nations, and its overthrow will hardly have begotten great joy in Nebuchadnezzar's heart. It would be reasonable to expect that Nebuchadnezzar would not have erected such an image near the beginning of his reign (604 B. C.) when many of his conquests were still to be made. Nor at or near the end of his reign (562 B. C.), when the incentive for such an act would hardly be found; but at some time when he had completed his major conquests and had felt the magnitude and the strength of his empire.[13]

Why did Nebuchadnezzar erect the golden image? Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar erected the image in an attempt to consolidate his power in a show of forced submission following the coup attempt of 594/595 B.C. mentioned in the Babylonian Chronicles.[14] Others suggest Nebuchadnezzar was influenced by his travels to Egypt where he had encountered similar colossal statues and erected the image to show



Babylon was a world power on a par with Egypt.[15] Harrison suggests the events of chapter 3 are part of a reformation undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar encouraging greater participation by the general populace in religious rituals.[16] Seiss offers the unlikely explanation Nebuchadnezzar erected the image in a sincere, but misdirected, desire to acknowledge the God-given role he played in the dream of chapter 2.[17] We believe Greene is closer to the mark in suggesting a motivation common to Babel of Old under Nimrod and Neo-Babylonia of Nebuchadnezzar's time:

> We are not in ignorance concerning Nimrod and his attempt to build a tower to heaven, as recorded in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis—and Nebuchadnezzar was at this point walking in the footsteps of Nimrod, by-passing the God of heaven to set up his own god, drawing his own blueprints for a world-wide kingdom that should never crumble and fall.[18]

In the previous chapter, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream of an image of a man that Daniel interpreted as an outline of the Times of the Gentiles: a period when global dominion is taken away from the throne of David and given over to a series of Gentile empires. As Daniel explained, the image's head of gold represented the Babylonian empire: "you [Nebuchadnezzar] are this head of gold" (Dan. 2:38). Given the context of chapter 3 (following upon chapter 2), it seems natural to understand Nebuchadnezzar's action in light of the previous chapter's dream. In that dream, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was represented by only a small portion of the image: the *head of gold* (Dan. 2:38). By way of comparison, this image is *entirely of gold*:

> The author of Daniel clearly intends us to see a close connection between Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the statue which he erected *on the plain of Dura* (1). It may have been a representation of the king himself (*cf*. Dan. 2:38, 'You are that head of gold'). In this case, the fact that by contrast with the dream-statue (Dan. 2:31-33) it was made entirely of gold (*i.e*. probably covered in gold-plating) suggests Nebuchadnezzar's insanely self-centred reaction to Daniel's interpretation (Dan. 2:44-45).[19]

The action of Nebuchadnezzar in erecting the all-gold image is a sign of his rejection of the God-given revelation provided through his dream and Daniel's interpretation:[20]

> Nebuchadnezzar had this image made entirely of gold. This was an expression of rebellion against God's revelation. Through this image of gold the king was saying: **"I don't care what the God of heaven has said. My kingdom of Babylon will not fall to another Gentile kingdom. It will rule throughout the times of the Gentiles"** [emphasis mine][21]

Erecting the image represented Nebuchadnezzar's refusal to acknowledge the implications of the dream that his kingdom would eventually be supplanted.[22]

> It might be out of pride and vanity, and to set forth the glory and stability of his monarchy, as if he was not only the head of gold, but as an image all of gold; and to contradict the interpretation of his dream, and avert the fate of his empire signified by it;[23]

> Rejecting how the idea that any kingdom could follow his own, he may have determined to show the permanence of his golden kingdom by having the entire image covered with gold. Thus, he clung to the more flattering aspects of the dream interpretation but dropped the rest.[24]

What did the golden image represent? If, as we suppose, the image is Nebuchadnezzar's response to the revelation provided by Daniel's interpretation of the dream in the previous chapter, it would be natural for the image to resemble that of chapter 2: the form of a man. "According to a number of patristic authors, the image represented a deification of Nebuchadnezzar himself."[25]

Since the passage doesn't explicitly identify the image, we can't be dogmatic on this point. It is also possible the image depicted one of the Babylonian gods.[26] Perhaps the image had neither the form of a man or a god, but represented a geometrical shape or astronomical body.[27]

Because of the repeated command to "fall down and worship" the image (Dan. 3:4, 7, 10-11, 12, 14), it seems the image was to be considered deity. Even so, the chapter makes a distinction between *worshipping the image* and *serving the gods of Babylon* (Dan. 3:12, 14, 18) implying the image itself may not be that of a Babylonian god. However, if the Babylonian leader was thought to reign by divine mandate, it would be natural for the image to serve both religious and political purposes. "Now remember that there was no distinction in their cultures between the political and the religious. The king was a political religious figure . . ."[28] Even if the image was in the form of a Babylonian god, bowing before it would serve to demonstrate allegiance to the king. "It is far more likely that the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar's patron god, Nebo (or Nabu). Prostration before Nebo would amount to a pledge of allegiance to his viceroy, *Nabu-kudurri-uṣur*, i.e., Nebuchadnezzar."[29]

We believe this merger of the religious and the political is intentional and reflects the typological connection between the events of Daniel 3 and the Great Tribulation. In a similar way, the *political* ruler of the final global kingdom during the Times of the Gentiles, the Antichrist, seeks *worship* (Rev. 13:4, 14-15).

The image is said to be made of gold. If made of solid gold, it represented a staggering amount of wealth:[30]

> A 90 ft. tall golden obelisk, 9 ft. x 9 ft. at the base and tapering to 6 ft. x 6 ft. at the head (the conventional taper of an Egyptian obelisk), would weigh 3,000 tons and, at today's values, be worth 22 billion dollars [Mills wrote in 1988]. Now, this is a spectacular monument, but not an impossible one for the Babylonian Empire's resources, an empire which had epitomized materialism since its inception. Furthermore, this would probably have suited Nebuchadnezzar's conceit, for it would have weighed four times as much as the largest Egyptian obelisk and therefore have eclipsed their technological accomplishment in erecting these monuments. Finally, Herodotus reports that there were solid gold idols in Babylon, and mentions that the gold used for an idol of Marduk and its associated furnishings weighed 18½ tons; while Pliny gives an account of an all-gold image pillaged by Anthony, so an all-gold monument was not without precedent in Babylon's history.[31]

As mentioned by Mills, Herodotus reports solid gold images in Babylon:

> In the Babylonian temple there is another shrine below, where there is a great golden image of Zeus, sitting at a great golden table, and the footstool and the chair are also gold; the gold of the whole was said by the Chaldeans to be eight hundred talents' weight. Outside the temple is a golden altar. There is also another great altar, on which are sacrificed the full-grown of the flocks; only nurslings may be sacrificed on the golden altar, but on the greater altar the Chaldeans even offer a thousand talents' weight of frankincense yearly, when they keep the festival of this god; and in the days of Cyrus there was still in this sacred enclosure a statue of solid gold twenty feet high. I myself have not seen it, but I relate what is told by the Chaldeans. Darius son of Hystaspes proposed to take this statue but dared not; Xerxes his son took it, and killed the priest who warned him not to move the statue. Such is the furniture of this temple, and there are many private offerings besides.[32]

Some believe it unlikely such a large image could have been constructed of solid gold.[33] They suggest the image was merely overlaid with gold:

> The expression "golden altar" is used in Ex. 39:38; 40:5. Yet Ex. 37:25, 26 informs us that this altar was made of "acacia wood," and that Moses "overlaid it with pure gold." Referring specifically to idols, Isa. 40:19; 41:7 describe the process of overlaying with gold as involving the use of nails and solder. Isaiah is very evidently describing the current method in the manufacture of images. Jeremiah 10:3-9 agrees with this.[34]

In an attempt to late-date the book of Daniel to the Maccabean era, critics suggest this chapter is a literary embellishment of the Abomination of Desolation recorded in the book of Maccabees (1 Maccabees 1:54). But there are significant differences between this event and the Abomination of Desolation in the time of the Maccabees:

> Religious persecution was not Nebuchadnezzar's object whereas Antiochus Epiphanes was engaged in what must be termed religious persecution in the strongest sense of the term. For this wicked king not only commanded to have only one type of worship practiced in his realm, namely, the worship of his gods, but also commanded to stop the worship at the Temple in Jerusalem; to desecrate the sanctuary; to set up strange altars,

> temples, and images; to offer pigs and other unclean beasts; to forbid circumcision; and the like (cf. 1 Macc. 1:43-51); and all this with the threat of death for disobedience.[35]

The image erected by Nebuchadnezzar and its requisite worship have more in common with the Abomination of Desolation predicted by Jesus (Mat. 24:15; Mark 13:14) than the defilement of the temple in the Maccabean era.[36] See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits

Depending on the size of cubit, the image could have been over 100-feet high and 10-feet wide.[37]

Translations that give the dimensions in modern terms (e.g., "ninety feet high and nine feet wide"[38]) do the reader a disservice because they obscure the sexagesimal number base of the measurements. The use of the sexagesimal system for the measurements provides evidence of the authenticity of Daniel because Babylon employed such a measurement system.[39] The sexagesimal-based dimensions draw our attention to the number six, having biblical significance as the *number of man* which represents man's incompleteness and human willfulness.[40]

Consider the following biblical passages containing the number six:

- Man was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:26-27)
- The height of Goliath is given as six cubits and a span (1S. 17:4)
- The weight of Goliath's spearhead was six hundred shekels (1S. 17:7)
- The giant men of Gath had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot (2S. 21:20; 1Chr. 20:6)
- The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold (2Chr. 9:13)
- Solomon's throne had six steps (2Chr. 9:18)
- The idolatrous image erected by Nebuchadnezzar was sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide (Dan. 3:1▸)
- There were six stone waterpots Jesus used when changing water to wine (John 2:6)
- The number of the beast, 666, is said to be the number of a man (Rev. 13:18▸)

The number six is one short of seven, signifying perfection, completeness.[41] Strive as he might, man's willful efforts to be independent of God fall short. "[The image] is stamped with the same number that distinguishes the Beast in Rev. 13▸—the number of a man, six hundred sixty and six. You will notice the passage tells us that it was sixty cubits high and six cubits broad."[42] The ultimate expression of the number of man is the number 666, associated with the ruler of the final Gentile kingdom, the Antichrist: Although this biblical connotation of the number six is not a Babylonian idea,[43] the dimensions seem intended, by the sovereignty of God, to hint at a connection between the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar and a similar event at the close of history:

> The dimensions of the Image are not without significance. Its height was sixty cubits, and its breadth six cubits. Now six is the "NUMBER OF MAN." Six stops short of seven, which is the "Perfect Number," or the number of Completeness. Six then is the number of human incompleteness. Man was made on the sixth day. His appointed days of labor are six, the seventh day is God's day. The number six reminds us of the number of the "Beast" in Rev. 13:18▸, which is 666. Little did Nebuchadnezzar know that the erection of that "Golden Image" on the Plain of Dura was a "Prophetic Fore-Shadowing" of that Image that the "False Prophet" shall command the people to make to the "Beast," or "Antichrist."[44]

> Nebuchadnezzar did not know that he was blueprinting and erecting an image that measured up to the prophetic size—sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide. he did not know that his image was a type of the false prophet who will appear in the end of the age during the reign of the beast—the Antichrist, the Satanic trinity. Nebuchadnezzar did not know that his gigantic statue of gold was a symbol of prophecy, and that one day a greater one than he would cause an image to speak, and that all would be killed who would not worship the beast and his image.[45]

> Although Nebuchadnezzar did not do this intentionally, the dimensions of six cubits wide and sixty cubits high introduces the number six which is prominent in the Bible as the number of man (cf. Rev. 13:18▸).[46]

The relative dimensions of the image, 60-to-6 (10-to-1), are disproportionate for a human image. If the image was of a human form, it probably stood elevated atop a gold pedestal.[47] A pedestal would have allowed the image to be visible to the multitude gathered for the dedication ceremony:[48]

> The proportions disturb us: if a living being, human or divine, was represented, then the ratio 60:6 or 10:1 hardly agrees with the proportions of a human figure in which height and breadth are in the ratio of 6:1 or even 5:1. This leads the majority of commentators to assume that the term *ts^{e}lem* is elastic enough to allow for an image that was provided with a proportionately tall pedestal. Many suggest 24 cubits of pedestal and 36 cubits of image proper in order to secure a human figure atop the pedestal in the proportion of 6:1.[49]

The word for *width* in this verse is פְּתָיֵהּ [*p^{e}ṯâēh*], which some believe describes the depth (length), rather than width, of the house of God in Cyrus' decree to rebuild the Jewish temple (Ezra 6:3). They suggest the unusual relative dimensions of the image may describe the ratio of height-to-depth rather than height-to-width.[50]

Our view is the image was probably of a human form—constituting Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to the dream in the previous chapter—standing atop a pedestal (as we've depicted in the illustration of *The Golden Image*). Whatever form the image took, its dimensions are comparable to other large statues known to history:

> Large statues constructed by kings of ancient times were not uncommon. For example, the Great Sphinx in Egypt (240 ft. long by 66 ft. high) with its lion body and human head was constructed about 2500 B.C. and still casts its sightless glare over the desert sands. Rameses II and other pharaohs built large statues of themselves and placed them throughout Egypt. Additional examples of huge statues are the Colossus of Rhodes (ca. 300 B.C.), which stood 105 feet tall, and the great Statue of Zeus (forty ft. high) in Olympia, Greece (fifth century B.C.). According to the Greek historian Herodotus, there was a statue of Bel (Marduk) in Babylon (at least as early as the time of Cyrus) made of solid gold that stood eighteen feet high.[51]
>
> When we search for similar monuments in the ancient world, we find that proportions of 10:1 are typical of Egyptian obelisks. Furthermore, spectacular as the height of Nebuchadnezzar's monument was, it was not unprecedented, for the tallest obelisk is that erected in 1474 BC at El-Karnak in honor of Queen Hachesput. This 108 ft. tall granite monolith was erected during her lifetime, and many hundreds of lesser examples existed in Egypt in Nebuchadnezzar's time.[52]
>
> While the height of this statue was quite imposing, it was not beyond reason. The Colossus at Rhodes (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) was even higher. Rhodes was an island trade center in the Aegean Sea. A bronze statue thirty-two meters high (105 ft.) of the sun god Helios was erected at the mouth of Mandrákion harbor to commemorate the end of Demetrius' long siege against Rhodes (ca. 305 BC). This statue took twelve years to build (ca. 294-282 BC).[53]

in the plain of Dura

The location of this plain and its relation to the city of Babylon is uncertain:

> It might be Tell Der, sixteen miles southwest of modern Baghdad, or, perhaps more likely Tolul Dura ("mounds of Dura"), twelve miles south-southeast of Hillah. Near the latter place runs the river Dura, which empties into the Euphrates some six miles south of ancient Babylon.[54]

Keil mentions several possible locations, including a site several miles[55] outside the city where archaeological remains indicate a base suitable for such a structure once stood:

> The ancients make mention of two places of the name of Dura, the one at the mouth of the Chaboras where it empties itself into the Euphrates, not far from Carchemish (Polyb. v. 48; Ammian. Marc. xxiii. 5, 8, xxiv. 1, 5), the other beyond the Tigris, not far from Apollonia (Polyb. v. 52; Amm. Marc. xxv. 6, 9). Of these the latter has

> most probability in its favour, since the former certainly did not belong to the province of Babylon, which according to Xenophon extended 36 miles south of Tiphsach (cf. Nieb. *Gesch. Assurs*, S. 421). The latter, situated in the district of Sittakene, could certainly be reckoned as belonging to the province of Babylon, since according to Strabo, Sittakene, at least in the Old Parthian time, belonged to Babylon (Nieb. p. 420). But even this place lay quite too far from the capital of the kingdom to be the place intended. We must, without doubt, much rather seek for this plain in the neighbourhood of Babylon, where, according to the statement of Jul. Oppert (*Expéd. Scientif. en Mésopotamie*, i. p. 238ff.), there are at present to be found in the S.S.E. of the ruins representing the former capital a row of mounds which bear the name of *Dura*, at the end of which, along with two larger mounds, there is a smaller one which is named *el Mokaṭṭaṭ* (=*la colline alignée*), which forms a square six metres high, with a basis of fourteen metres, wholly built *en briques crues* (Arab. *lbn*), which shows so surprising a resemblance to a colossal statue with its pedestal, that Oppert believes that this little mound is the remains of the golden statue erected by Nebuchadnezzar.[56]

Perhaps a location outside the city was preferred so the imposing structures of the city itself, reaching as high as 280 feet into the air, would not detract from the impressiveness of the image.[57] A location outside the city would also provide ample room for the multitude attending the dedication of the image.[58] Because of its height, some have suggested the image might have been incorporated into the city wall to obtain needed support.[59] Jewish mystical writings suggest the image was set up in the same location as the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4-5).[60]

in the province of Babylon

"Bultema notes that this descriptive phrase has some importance to it. *It has recently come to light that there were two additional Duras. Daniel knew this very well and so made a careful distinction. A Palestinian Jew in the time of Antiochus could not possibly have given the details mentioned in this chapter.*"[61]

3.3.1.1 - Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation

The Fiery Furnace

62

Even though Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were all real people living in Babylon during the sixth century B.C., the historical events of their lives accord with the sovereign hand of God. Much like the book of Ruth, the book of Daniel contains prophetic typology pointing toward future events beyond the immediate circumstances it records.[63] While it can be unwise to lean too heavily on typology when interpreting Scripture, it can also be unwise to ignore significant similarities between a passage under study and other portions of Scripture.

This typological relationship between Daniel 3‣ and prophetic passages concerning the end of our present age is recognized by many who have studied this book.

> The actions of Nebuchadnezzar in this third chapter of Daniel are definitely prophetic. As we go along, we will see, step by step, how this image plays a part in making known the things that will happen during the last week of the seventy weeks of prophecy in the book of Daniel, the last week being the seven years when the Antichrist will reign here upon this earth . . .[64]

The parallels between Daniel 3‣ and the events leading to Jesus' return are numerous, by the intentional design of God. He is sovereignly directing history, from Daniel's time to our time, and beyond.

- **Worship of The Beast and His Image** - In this chapter we find Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the known world, erecting an image and requiring its worship upon penalty of death. "This historical incident seems to have prophetic significance as well. In the coming Tribulation a Gentile ruler (Dan. 7:8‣) will demand for himself the worship that belongs to God (2Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:8‣). Any who refuse to acknowledge his right to receive

worship will be killed (Rev. 13:15▸)."[65] "This event, though actual history, is a typical scene picturing the trial and deliverance of a faithful remnant of Daniel's people that is to take place in the Time of the End. There will come a day when (like the great image set up by Nebuchadnezzar) what the Lord Jesus calls 'the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,' is going to be set up in Jerusalem by the Antichrist of the future. See Mat. 24:15."[66] "For that image which was set up by Nebuchadnezzar had indeed a height of sixty cubits, while the breadth was six cubits; on account of which Ananias, Azarias, and Misaël, when they did not worship it, were cast into a furnace of fire, pointing out prophetically, by what happened to them, the wrath against the righteous which shall arise towards the [time of the] end. For that image, taken as a whole, was a prefiguring of this man's coming, decreeing that he should undoubtedly himself alone be worshipped by all men."[67] "It does illustrate for us that which will take place in the future when the Antichrist will establish an object of worship and demand that all on the earth worship 'the image of the beast' (Rev. 13:3-4▸, 14-18▸). The believers of that day will face the same kind of severe consequences for their refusal to worship as did Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego."[68] "As idolatry was forced by this first empire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Apocalypse shows us the last stage of the last Gentile empire; and there we find that what it began with, it will end with: that the same compulsion used here, to make all its subjects bow down and worship in a way of its own setting up, will reappear at the close."[69] "In the future tribulation, believers will face the challenge (at the peril of their lives) of whether or not to receive the mark of the beast and to worship the image of the beast (Rev. 13:14-18▸). (The demand to worship Nebuchadnezzar's statue almost seems like a foreshadowing of that future event.)"[70]

- **The Preservation of Israel** - The preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego amidst the fiery furnace following their refusal to worship the image points toward the preservation of the nation of Israel during the Great Tribulation (Mat. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Rev. 2:22▸; 7:14▸), the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7 cf Isa. 13:12; Dan. 12:1▸). "The three Jews, faithful to God while the nation of Israel far from their land bear no testimony, are a fit type of the Jewish remnant in the last days (Isa. 1:9; Rom. 11:5) who will be faithful in the furnace of the great tribulation (Ps. 2:5; Rev. 7:14▸)."[71] "Someday, the entire nation of Israel will enter into its 'furnace of blazing fire' (i.e., the Great Tribulation), and God's power to bring His own through that time of trial will be obvious to all (Isa. 4:3-5)."[72] "As we have seen that Nebuchadnezzar's 'Golden Image' was a type of the 'IMAGE OF THE BEAST' (Rev. 13:13-15▸), that is to be set up in Jerusalem in the closing days of this Dispensation, so the 'Three Hebrew Children,' who would not worship the 'Golden Image' of Nebuchadnezzar, are a type of the 'JEWISH REMNANT,' the 144,000 'Sealed Ones' of Rev. 7:3-8▸, who will pass unscathed through 'The Great Tribulation.' They are seen later in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 15:1-3▸) standing on a 'Sea of Glass,' MINGLED WITH FIRE, typical of the 'FIERY TRIALS' (1Pe. 1:7) through which they had passed."[73] See *Preservation of Israel*.
- **Unity Through False Worship** - The attempt by Nebuchadnezzar to achieve unity within his realm by wedding religious and political allegiance will be taken up again by the Antichrist at the time of the end. "The attempt of this great king of Babylon to unify the religions of his empire by self-deification will be repeated by the beast, the last head of the Gentile world-dominion (Rev. 13:11-15▸)."[74] "The Gentile dominion is not over yet. And I believe that the close of it will bring in the same thing with as great force as ever. The book of the Revelation shows us that the last great Gentile king will employ all the authority of his government to enforce what might be called the 'religion' of that day. And then God will put forth His power miraculously to preserve His witnesses for their appointed work. . . . When this takes place, we shall not be upon the scene."[75] Indeed, the groundwork necessary to achieve this result has been underway for some time. Writing in 1911, Gaebelein observed the trend toward a world religion: "And do we not find here lessons likewise for our day? We hear from many sides the cries for a new religion, for a universal religion. It will surely come; yea, it is almost upon us. The age will not run out irreligiously. The false worship, the Cain-cult is all about us. It is the bloodless religion, the religion which exalts man."[76] Larkin, writing in 1929, also mentioned it: "There are movements on foot today for a union of all religious denominations and sects in one vast organization. The purpose is to establish one 'Universal Religion' that will appeal to the 'Artistic' and 'Esthetic' in man. A religion that is 'Cainite' in character because there is no BLOOD in it, and that exalts man and his works, which the Scriptures declare will be the character of the closing days of the 'Times of the Gentiles,' when men shall have 'the form of Godliness' without the 'POWER.' (2Ti. 3:1-7)."[77] Greene also described this global religious trend when writing in 1964: "Nebuchadnezzar was making an

all-out attempt to weld the peoples of earth together in one mind and heart, religiously—on their faces before his magnificent idol of gold; and even as I prepare these messages, headlines in newspapers, magazines, periodicals and newscasts are crying out for union in religion today! The World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Council are doing all humanly possible to bring denominations together in unity and universal religion, making the whole world of one religious group known as the World Church. The groups who are striving to unite all religions under one head and one name, deny the virgin birth, the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. They advocate a man-made religion and this will terminate in the church of Antichrist, which will be destroyed when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom."[78]

- **The Beginning and End of the Times of the Gentiles** - This chapter records the prideful idolatry of the first kingdom whereas Revelation 13 (and elsewhere) record the prideful idolatry of the last kingdom during the time, when global rule remains vested in Gentile hands. "Daniel 3 and Revelation 13 are identical as having to do with God's dealings with the chosen people Israel and the Gentiles. Daniel 3 marks the *beginning* of 'the times of the Gentiles'; Revelation 13 marks the *ending* of 'the times of the Gentiles.' From Daniel 3 through the reign of Antichrist, Gentile power will rule the world and the nation Israel will suffer."[79] "We have said that these historical passages are prophetic as well; this is a case in point. This chapter reveals that as the 'times of the Gentiles' began with idolatry, so they will end. Refer here to Revelation 13:3-8, where the world worships the beast in the last days."[80] "The beginning foreshadows the end of the times of the Gentiles. That end is described in the xiii chapter of Revelation."[81]
- **Church Absent?** - Some suggest Daniel's absence from the events of this chapter is representative of the Church's absence when similar events take place during the Tribulation. "The events recorded here in this chapter are an historical incident, but we should also note that it is an adumbration, a prophetic picture, of the Great Tribulation Period. The fiery furnace represents the suffering that will occur during the Great Tribulation. This man Nebuchadnezzar represents the beast out of the sea, the Antichrist, the last great world ruler. This image of gold represents the abomination of desolation of which the Lord Jesus spoke. These three Hebrew children represent the remnant which will be miraculously preserved during the Great Tribulation Period. And then, quite interestingly, Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter at all. He wasn't around. Apparently he acted not only as a Supreme Court Justice, but also as prime minister of the kingdom. He was out on kingdom business, out on the king's highway somewhere. He is, therefore, a picture of the redeemed ones who are to be removed before the Great Tribulation. What a very wonderful picture is presented here!"[82] This suggestion may have merit if this chapter is taken in isolation. It is less convincing when one considers that Daniel *is present* in chapter 6 where he will be cast into a den of lions.[83]

3.3.2 - Daniel 3:2

the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates

Nebuchadnezzar summoned all the highest levels of leadership within his realm to the dedication. This could indicate one of his motives for dedicating the image was to elicit a show of allegiance and unity from his leaders following an insurrection or politically unstable situation in Babylon. See commentary on *Daniel 3:1*.

In what follows, it is helpful to remember only the leadership was summoned to the dedication ceremony. Although numerous (Dan. 3:4), this was a relatively small subset from among the general populace of the realm.

Miller describes the roles occupied by the various leaders invited to the dedication:

> Seven different classes of officials are named, and it may be assumed that they are listed in order of importance, beginning with the most prominent. These are (1) "the satraps" (also NASB, NRSV; "the princes," KJV; Aram. *ʾăḥašdarpĕnayyāʿ*, from Old Persian *kshathrapāvn*, "protector of the kingdom"), rulers over the larger divisions of the empire (cf. Dan. 6:1); (2) "prefects" (also NASB, NRSV; "governors," KJV; Aram. *signayyāʿ*, loan word from Akk. *šaknu*), high-ranking officials directly responsible to the satraps; (3) "governors" (also NASB, NRSV; "captains," KJV; Aram. *paḥăwātāʿ*, from Akk. *bēl piḥāti*, "lord of an administrative district"),

> administrators of smaller regions like the postexilic province of Judea (cf. Mal. 1:8); (4) "advisers" ("counselors," NASB, NRSV; "judges," KJV; Aram. *ʿădargāzĕrayyaʿ*, likely derived from Old Persian *andarzaghar*); (5) "treasurers" (also NRSV, NASB, KJV; Aram. *gĕdābĕrayyāʿ*, presumably from Old Persian *ganzabara*); (6) "judges" (also NASB; "counsellors," KJV; "justices," NRSV; Aram. *dĕtābĕrayyāʿ*, a loan word from the Old Persian *dātabara*); and (7) "magistrates" (also NASB, NRSV; "sheriffs," KJV; "the police magistrates" Hartman; Aram. *tiptāyēʿ*, perhaps from "Old Pers.*adipati*, lit., 'over-chief' "). Baldwin observes that the last two terms have been discovered "in Aramaic documents of the sixth and fifth centuries." Other lesser important dignitaries are collectively specified as "all the other provincial officials." [84]

As can be seen from the wide range of terms employed by various English translations and their overlapping use, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the roles of some of these officials.[85] Adding to this ambiguity is the number of years between the events described here and our time.[86] The variety of titles also reflects the extensive region and diversity of peoples that were subjects of Babylon.

Some have objected that many of the terms are Persian, but Babylon had not yet fallen to Medo-Persia, an event that would occur some four to five decades later as described in Daniel 5. The Persian terms were probably supplied by Daniel later, perhaps when he edited his writings near the end of his life. In his subsequent service under the Medes and Persians, he would have naturally acquired an extensive knowledge of terms used within the Persian government:[87]

> Observe that five of these titles are apparently of Iranian origin, even though the scene for this episode is early in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (the Median tongue might conceivably have contributed some loan words even back around 600 B.C.). We must conclude, therefore, that Daniel 3, in its final form at least, must have been composed after the rise of the Persian Empire (in 539); and the terms used must have replaced those that were actually employed in Aramaic around the turn of the century. This agrees perfectly with the supposition that Daniel finished this book for publication around 532 B.C., when the new Persian titles would have been current in the metropolis of Babylon. At the same time it should be pointed out that by the second century B.C. (the Maccabean period), some of these Persian loan words had become obsolete and could no longer be correctly translated, at least by the Alexandrian Jews.[88]

See *Persian Words*.

all the officials of the provinces

The most significant leaders gathered to participate in the dedication ceremony. In their absence, we would naturally assume the affairs of the nation continued to operate normally by their subordinates within the governmental.[89]

Although, if this event occurred after 598/597 B.C., there would have been many additional Jews in Babylon besides the relatively few that were taken with Daniel in the first deportation.[90] Only officials were invited to the ceremony. This helps explain why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were the only three who refused to bow before the image: they may have been the only Jews *among the leadership* who were invited to the dedication.[91]

If Zedekiah was present at the ceremony, it would seem the Jewish king, in contrast to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, complied with the command to worship the image. See commentary on *Daniel 3:12*.

to the dedication of the image

Dedication is from חֲנֻכָּה [*ḥănukkâ*], similar to the Hebrew term used to describe the dedication of the second temple upon Israel's return from Babylon (Ezra 6:16-17) and the "Feast of Dedication" or "Festival of Lights" commemorating the subsequent cleansing of the temple following its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 164 B.C. (John 10:22-23).

3.3.3 - Daniel 3:3

the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates

See commentary on *Daniel 3:2*.

3.3.4 - Daniel 3:4

To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages

The phrase *peoples, nations, and languages* is rendered in the LXX by λαοί, φυλαί, γλῶσσαι [*laoi, phylai, glōssai*]. The global character of Nebuchadnezzar's expansive realm typifies the global realm of the final Gentile kingdom revealed in the NT, composed of φυλῆς καί γλώσσης καί λαοῦ [*phylēs kai glōssēs kai laou*], "tribes and tongues and nations" (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 14:6; 17:15). See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

3.3.5 - Daniel 3:5

the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery

We know from archaeology that similar instruments were used at Babylon.

Babylonian Musician

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> A bas-relief from the reign of Ashur-bani-pal (668-626 B.C.), now in the British Museum, pictures a gathering of Elamite musicians greeting the royal conquerors returning from battle. Eight performers are playing stringed instruments, and one individual is playing a drum. These musicians are accompanied by two individuals playing double-reed pipes. No flutes are included in the group. Koldewey's excavations of Babylon at the turn of the century also gave some evidence of the musical instruments in use in Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian period. Included in the terra-cotta figures discovered by Koldewey were representations of individuals playing the lute, the tambourine, the harp, the kithara, and the double-reed pipe.[93]

There is extensive discussion among commentators as to the identity of each instrument.[94] As interesting as these discussions may be, accurate knowledge of the terms employed and changes in the construction of musical instruments over time make precise identification difficult.[95]

The power of music in worship settings, especially involving a large crowd, cannot be overstated. It seems man was made with a God-given propensity to respond to beautiful music, especially when used in the service of worship. A representative sampling from the Psalms reveals the importance of music in worship:

> Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. (Ps. 96:1-4)

> All the earth shall worship You And sing praises to You; They shall sing praises to Your name. Selah Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men. (Ps. 66:4-5)

> O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations. (Ps. 108:1-3)

Music played an important role at the dedication of Solomon's temple, one of the most elaborate worship services recorded in the Old Testament:

> And the priests attended to their services; the Levites also with instruments of the music of the LORD, which King David had made to praise the LORD, saying, "For His mercy endures forever," whenever David offered praise by their ministry. The priests sounded trumpets opposite them, while all Israel stood. (2Chr. 7:6)

Because of its innate power of influence, music played an important role as a *lingua franca* among the different nationalities attending Nebuchadnezzar's dedication ceremony. The music influenced the crowd to readily bow in worship before the grand image.

> All men are religious by nature, and are easily carried away by anything that stirs their religious feelings. Knowing this, Nebuchadnezzar took advantage of it. Everything was done to excite and stir the religious emotions of that vast multitude on the "Plain of Dura." Large orchestras, with their various musical instruments, were stationed at convenient places, and all the paraphernalia and ritualistic ceremony of idolatrous worship, with the most gorgeous display of religious trappings, such as were used by the "Babylonian Cults," were doubtless used to impress the bystanders, and get them to worship the Image.[96]

In our day, great discernment is needed among Christian pastors, worship leaders, and congregants to ensure the music we offer in praise is biblically informed rather than serving to bypass our mental faculties in favor of unrestrained emotion.[97] Lacking such discernment, we can easily fall prey to emotional manipulation—even offering unbiblical expressions of worship before God.

> Music is the international language. Music would be perfectly understood no matter what language you spoke. So music becomes the international language and it is music that is the tool of conveying the command to worship. Music is viewed as a manipulation device, in other words. . . . music still is being used as a manipulation device and the Christian when he performs, when he writes, when he composes, ought to be very careful that he is not using his music to manipulate. Music is an aid to worship but it doesn't deliberately try to put . . . thoughts in one's minds.[98]

> And so music today is used in most churches as a manipulative tool to get people into a certain mindset, a certain emotive state which is identified as worship, if you just didn't reach that state then you didn't worship. It has nothing to do with the content of the teaching and the content of Biblical instruction that has come out of the pulpit. But [true] worship has to do with obedience to the authority of God, submission to God, and learning doctrine and applying it in our lives.[99]

Critics note some of the instruments are described by Greek words. They interpret this as evidence the book of Daniel must have been written late, when the Greek Empire was at its height. As we've observed, music is a universal language of sorts, and has frequently and early bridged cultures of diverse language. This was the case for Greek music and cultural contacts well before Alexander's time.

Archaeologist Robert Koldewey

> Even though we concede that the names of these three instruments plus the "herald" are words of Greek origin, we have said nothing that might lend weight to a later dating of the book of Daniel. To assume that Greek words would begin to appear in Hebrew or Aramaic only after Alexander's Greek empire had been established is to ignore historical evidence which points to contacts with the Greeks before Nebuchadnezzar's time.[101]

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> William F. Albright, a renowned archaeologist . . . stated: "The idea that Greece and Hellenic culture were little known in western Asia before Alexander the Great is difficult to eradicate. . . . Greek traders and mercenaries were familiar in Egypt and throughout Western Asia from the early seventh century on, if not earlier. As early as the sixth century B.C. the coasts of Syria and Palestine were dotted with Greek ports and trading emporia . . . There were Greek mercenaries in the armies of Egypt and Babylonia, of Psammetichus II and Nebuchadnezzar." [William F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Anchor, 1957), p. 377] [102]

The relatively few Greek words appearing here provide evidence in favor of the book's authenticity. "If Daniel had been written in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, it would be very difficult to explain why so few words of Greek origin occur in the Aramaic of Daniel." [103] "The Old Greek version failed to translate four of the terms accurately, probably because by Hellenistic times they had ceased to be intelligible, demonstrating that this chapter cannot be a Hellenistic composition." [104] See *Greek Words*.

in symphony

Symphony is from סוּמְפֹנְיָה [*sûm^{e}ppōn^{e}yâ*], a word whose meaning is uncertain. It may refer to the *harmony* or *concord* among the different instruments. [105] Or it may describe an additional musical instrument such as a bagpipe or drum. [106]

fall down and worship the gold image

How Nebuchadnezzar's attitude has changed from the close of the previous chapter when he had prostrated himself before Daniel in honor of Daniel's God (Dan. 2:46▸)! A considerable amount of time must have elapsed following the events of chapter 2▸ for Nebuchadnezzar to have reverted so dramatically to his pagan roots. See commentary on the phrase, *an image of gold*, in *Daniel 3:1*.

It is helpful to understand the relationship between the Babylonian state and its gods. There was no significant separation between the religious and political realms as we might expect today. "In the religions of the ancient near East, kings were believed to rule on behalf of the patron god(s) of the state. Therefore venerating the statue expressed loyalty to the king as well as worship of the pagan god it represented." [107] The king himself might not be directly worshiped, but his subject's willingness to worship the image constituted a show of loyalty endorsing the divine right of the king to rule. [108] The association of the king and the patron gods of Babylon is evident by how refusal to worship the image is interpreted as showing disregard for Nebuchadnezzar as well as his gods (Dan. 3:12▸, 14▸, 18▸). [109] Although the Jews refuse to worship the image on religious grounds, it seems Nebuchadnezzar's purpose for the ceremony may have been mainly political.

> The fact that the thought of the service of the gods is coupled with the worship of the golden image does not invalidate our contention that the whole issue was primarily political. For to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty was in reality tantamount to saying that his gods had gained the upper hand. Consequently the service of the gods was involved at least to this extent. [110]

A refusal to worship the image was to impugn the power of the gods thought to have facilitated Nebuchadnezzar's overwhelming victory over the Jews, Jerusalem, and the house of their God: the temple in Jerusalem. [111]

Recall that the image in the dream of the previous chapter had not only different metals, signifying successive empires, but also feet and toes mixed with clay: it was destined to become fragmented and unstable (Dan. 2:42-43▸). In contrast, this image was entirely of gold, having no clay. It seems Nebuchadnezzar intended worship of the image would be one means by which its all-gold character, symbolizing lasting unity, would become a reality. His realm would be the one that would stand, remaining homogeneous and strong:

> Nebuchadnezzar seems to have followed the common practice of kings. For although they proudly despise God, yet they arm themselves with religion to strengthen their power, and pretend to encourage the worship of

> God for the single purpose of retaining the people in obedience. . . . *What god, says he, can pluck out of my hand?* Why then did he worship any deity? Simply to retain the people by a curb, and fires to strengthen his own power, without the slightest affection of piety abiding within his mind. . . . they traffic in the name of God to attract greater reverence towards themselves; but at the same time, if they choose to change their deities a hundred times a-day, no sense of religion will hinder them.[112]

> There is no social dislocation to be compared with that which is produced by a difference of religion. Consequently, to avert so great a peril, union in religion was the measure that the devil insinuated into the mind of the politic Chaldean as the surest bond of his empire. He must have one common religious influence in order to weld together the hearts of his subjects. In all probability, to his mind it was a political necessity. Unite them in worship, unite all hearts in bowing down before one and the same object, and there would be something to furnish the hope and opportunity of consolidating all these scattered fragments into a whole.[113]

Nebuchadnezzar's ceremony illustrates the well-worn path of totalitarian leaders who prostitute religion in the service of egotistical political aspirations. He is one of many in the line extending from Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-9) to Antichrist (Rev. 13:15▸).[114] Nebuchadnezzar's requirement that the image be worshiped foreshadows events of the Great Tribulation. Yet, there are some important differences to consider. Unlike the final Gentile kingdom under Antichrist, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was polytheistic. Nebuchadnezzar was not outlawing the worship of all other gods.[115] He was merely insisting Babylon's patron god be included among those honored by his subjects.

> The "general" doctrine among the pagan has been, that there were many gods in heaven and earth, and that all were entitled to reverence. One nation was supposed to have as good a right to worship its own gods as another, and it was regarded as at least an act of courtesy to show respect to the gods that any nation adored, in the same way as respect would be shown to the sovereigns who presided over them. . . . Persecution of idolaters "by" those who were idolaters was, therefore, rarely known among the pagan, and "toleration" was not contrary to the views which prevailed, provided the gods of the country were recognized.[116]

> A refusal to yield homage to the gods of the kingdom they regarded as an act of hostility against the kingdom and its monarch, while every one might at the same time honour his own national god. This acknowledgement, that the gods of the kingdom were the more powerful, every heathen could grant; and thus Nebuchadnezzar demanded nothing in a religious point of view which every one of his subjects could not yield. To him, therefore, the refusal of the Jews could not but appear as opposition to the greatness of his kingdom.[117]

Other cultures and religious beliefs could accommodate pluralistic worship, but the Jews could not.[118] Pagan practices, even if begun without specific intention of persecuting God's people, will ultimately bring such a result because *the truth of God is exclusive, condemning the syncretistic practices of the cultures of the world*. Other peoples may add a new god to their pantheon of idols, but those who seek to walk with the One True God cannot —at any cost!

Nebuchadnezzar's actions provide further evidence the book of Daniel is genuine since it describes religious practices during the reign of Babylon. These are not the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes IV during the days of the Maccabees where he brutally suppressed Judaism:

> The objection is, substantially, that if the account in this chapter is true, it would prove that the Chaldeans were inclined to persecution on account of religious opinions, which, it is said, is contrary to their whole character as elsewhere shown. . . . To this objection the following reply may be made: . . . There is properly no account of "persecution" in this narrative, nor any reason to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar designed any such thing. . . . The universal maxim was, that the gods of all nations were to be respected, and hence, foreign gods might be introduced for worship, and respect paid to them without in any degree detracting from the honor which was due to their own. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, simply demanded that homage should be shown to the idol that "he" had erected; that the god whom "he" worshipped should be acknowledged as a god; and that respect should thus be shown to himself, and to the laws of his empire, by acknowledging "his" god, and rendering to that god the degree of homage which was his due. But it is nowhere intimated that he regarded his idol as the

> "only" true god, or that he demanded that he should be recognized as such, or that he was not willing that all other gods, in their place, should be honored.[119]
>
> The situation is not parallel to that at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who did practice religious persecution. Consequently they err who claim that the writer of the book took events from Daniel's time and drew lessons and comfort from them for his contemporaries.[120]

This command of Nebuchadnezzar to worship the image was a partial fulfillment of prophecy. God had warned Israel through Moses that if she remained disobedient, she would be sent into captivity among foreign nations where she would worship dead idols rather than the Living God:

> And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. **And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.** (Deu. 4:27-28) [emphasis mine]
>
> Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and **there you shall serve other gods**, which neither you nor your fathers have known-wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. (Deu. 28:64-66) [emphasis mine]

Some have suggested Nebuchadnezzar had the specific motive of leading the Jewish people into idolatry, hoping to forestall or preclude the close of the Times of the Gentiles portrayed by the dream sequence of kingdoms: if the Jews remained in ongoing idolatry, God would be unable to fulfill his promises to Israel, ushering in the final kingdom of God (the stone which smashed the image).[121] There is nothing in the text to support this idea. We have no indication Nebuchadnezzar was familiar with the covenantal relationship between God and the Jews or the related blessings and curses. Moreover, the command to worship the image included all leaders in his realm, not only Jews.

As we observed in the commentary on the first verse, "In prophetic symbolism the image points to the statue of the Antichrist of the Tribulation period, which will be set up for enforced worship in the Temple at Jerusalem."[122] See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

3.3.6 - Daniel 3:6

shall be cast immediately

Immediately is from שְׁעָה [*šā'â*], "immediately, suddenly, in the blink of an eye, i.e., a point of time immediately after a prior point of time, implying a virtually simultaneous action."[123] This implies the fiery furnace was already in operation at a nearby location to swiftly enforce the decree.

Nebuchadnezzar's power to impose capital punishment would be remembered by Daniel in a subsequent conversation with Belshazzar, "And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. **Whomever he wished, he executed**; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and **whomever he wished, he put down**" [emphasis mine] (Dan. 5:19▸).

This threat, made by the king of the *first* Gentile kingdom during the Times of the Gentiles, corresponds to the judgment inflicted upon the king of the *last* Gentile kingdom: "Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. **These two were cast alive into the lake of fire** burning with brimstone" [emphasis mine] (Rev. 19:20▸). See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

See commentary on *Daniel 5:19*.

burning fiery furnace

The music, as it worked upon the emotions, was intended to draw men to worship the visually impressive image, whereas the threat of the furnace was intended to overcome any remaining reluctance.[125]

The Jews' captivity in Babylonian brought to mind their Egyptian exile, which Moses had compared to being in an iron furnace:

> It is interesting that the captivity in Egypt was characterized by Moses as an "iron furnace" . . . מִכּוּר הַבַּרְזֶל [*mikkûr habbarzel*] . . . (Deu. 4:20). Jeremiah had likened the captivity in Babylon that Judah and Jerusalem faced because of breaking the covenant to the bondage in the iron furnace of Egypt . . . (Jer. 11:4) . . . The Babylonian captivity is a re-enactment of Egyptian bondage, with the exception that Judah and Jerusalem have gone into Babylonian captivity because they have broken the covenant.[126]

Old Lime Kiln

124

The immediacy of the threatened punishment suggests the "fiery furnace" may have been the kiln used for the smelting process during construction of the image.[127] If so, being cast into the furnace could be understood as a sacrifice to the pagan image. "Was this the smelting furnace the image was produced in, hence a kind of sacrifice to the pagan image?"[128]

If the furnace was used in the image's construction, then it may have followed the design of Mesopotamian smelting furnaces known to archaeology:

> Judging from bas-reliefs, it would seem that Mesopotamian smelting furnaces tended to be like an old-fashioned glass milk-bottle in shape, with a large opening for the insertion of the ore to be smelted and a smaller aperture at ground level for the admission of wood and charcoal to furnish the heat. There must have been two or more smaller holes at this same level to permit the insertion of pipes connected with large bellows, when it was desired to raise the temperature beyond what the flue or chimney would produce. Undoubtedly the furnace itself was fashioned of very thick adobe, resistant to intense heat. The large upper door was probably raised above the level of the fire bed so that the metal smelted from the ore would spill on the ground in case the crucibles were upset.[129]

> It was conical in shape and they would feed it from a door at the base and that's where there would be air flow, proper ventilation in order to get oxygen in there to increase the heat and the burning and the flames would come out the top.[130]

Smelting furnaces were often built on a hillside or man-made mound enabling easy access to the top of the furnace.[131] By their vertical orientation and the attachment of bellows, "Temperatures in these kilns could reach as high as 1000 degrees centigrade (i.e., about 1800 degrees Fahrenheit)."[132]

Jeremiah reveals Nebuchadnezzar's reputation for using fire as a means of capital punishment:

> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes. And because of them a curse shall be taken up by all the captivity of Judah who are in Babylon, saying, "**The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire**"; because they have done disgraceful things in Israel, have committed

> adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed I know, and am a witness, says the LORD. (Jer. 29:21-23) [emphasis mine]

As late as the last half of the 17th century, Persia was still using furnaces to enforce the law:

> Haevernick calls attention to the description of the traveller Chardin (*Voyage en Perse*, VI), who was in Persia 1671-77, and who notes that two furnaces of fire were kept burning for a month for consuming those who overcharged for food.[133]

> Chardin (vi. p. 118), after speaking of the common modes of inflicting the punishment of death in Persia, remarks that "there are other modes of inflicting the punishment of death on those who have violated the police laws, especially those who have contributed to produce scarcity of food, or who have used false weights, or who have disregarded the laws respecting taxes. The cooks," says he, "were fixed on spits, and roasted over a gentle fire (compare Jer. 29:22), and the bakers were cast into a burning oven. In the year 1668, when the famine was raging, I saw in the royal residence in Ispahan one of these ovens burning to terrify the bakers, and to prevent their taking advantage of the scarcity to increase their gains." See Rosenmuller, "Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc."[134]

In the subsequent preservation of the three Jews within the furnace, we see aspects of God's promise to preserve Israel through all history's afflictions—including her ultimate persecution by the final beastly kingdom.

> The "furnace of blazing fire" (NASB) fitly prefigures the Great Tribulation, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:5-7) under the Antichrist, when the last ruler of Gentile word power—like Nebuchadnezzar, its first ruler—through the false prophet will cause those who will "not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Rev. 13:15▸, NASB).[135]

> The literal image of Nebuchadnezzar is a typical prophecy of "the image of the beast," connected with mystical Babylon, in Rev. 13:14▸. The second mystical beast there causeth the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, and that as many as would not, should be killed (Rev. 13:12▸, 15▸).[136]

See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*. See *Preservation of Israel*.

3.3.7 - Daniel 3:7

all the people, nations, and languages

Nebuchadnezzar ruled over a diverse group of conquered cultures and peoples. The phrase only refers to the leaders representing the various peoples within his realm who were invited to the dedication ceremony (Dan. 3:2▸). See commentary on *Daniel 3:4*. See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

3.3.8 - Daniel 3:8

and accused the Jews

Accused is from אֲכַל [*'ăḵal*], *to consume*, "denounce, accuse, formally, to chew to pieces, implying a formal legal charge."[137] "אֲכַל קַרְצֵי דִי [*'ăḵal qarṣê ḏî*], literally, *to eat the flesh of any one*, is in Aramaic the common expression for *to calumniate, to denounce*."[138] "A phrase suggesting severe hatred and bitter language. 'Chewed them out' might be a comparable English idiom, though not as harsh."[139] "Chaldean men came forth and defamed the Jews."[140]

There are a number of reasons why the accusers may have highlighted the identity of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego as Jews. Jews were among the subjugated peoples under the thumb of Babylon who would have been

expected to occupy positions of servitude rather than leadership.[141] Their accusers may have been in a position to profit from their displacement—perhaps gaining appointment in their place.[142]

There is no indication that Nebuchadnezzar personally harbored antisemitic feelings,[143] yet it seems difficult to avoid the antisemitic implications of the subsequent statement of their accusers, "There are certain **Jews** whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon" [emphasis mine] (Dan. 3:12). Those who refused to worship could have been described as *certain individuals*, or *certain leaders*, or even *certain men*. But it was their identity as *Jews* their accusers emphasized when describing their behavior.

> Since there appears to have been no reason to point out their nationality, the designation seems to reflect a resentment toward the Jewish people and toward their religious practices that caused them to act so very differently from the rest of the world.[144]
>
> Compare the later accusation against Daniel (Dan. 6:13) and still later the wild and inflammatory charge by Haman against all Jews (Est. 3:8). Behind all such anti-Jewish movements throughout history, of course, looms Satan himself . . . (Rev. 12:10). Satan knew that through this divinely chosen people would come the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of all mankind (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 9:4-5).[145]

If antisemitism can be pictured as a smoldering fire, then one of the coals fueling that fire is the *uniqueness of the Jews*. As God's chosen nation,[146] Israel is unique. The very idea God would choose one people for a unique purpose leads to resentment and jealousy on the part of other people groups along with accusations of His unfairness. Yet, this is God's purpose for the Jews: he has separated them from among the nations, as if to serve as a litmus test for the obedience of the nations to His revealed will. Part of Israel's function requires that she never amalgamate among the nations—adopting their practices and world view.

> "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? **So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth**." (Ex. 33:16) [emphasis mine]
>
> "**What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, 'We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.'** As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you." (Eze. 20:32-33) [emphasis mine]
>
> For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! **A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations**. (Num. 23:9) [emphasis mine]
>
> Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; **their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws**. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. (Est. 3:8) [emphasis mine]
>
> But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, **being Jews**, exceedingly trouble our city; and **they teach customs which are not lawful for us**, being Romans, to receive or observe." (Acts 16:19-21) [emphasis mine]

This refusal, by the obedient within Israel to condone the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, is intentional and finds its source in God's sovereign will. Because of this, the Jews will always be "different"—standing out from other peoples on earth, incurring the unwelcome attention and jealousy of the nations. Israel stands as a thorn in the side of humanism's long-held global dream of unification, evident as early as Nimrod and Babel (Gen. 11), illustrated in the experiences of Daniel and his companions in Neo-Babylonia, and continuing until the final attempt by Antichrist to unite the world's people under a single political and religious system.

The antidote to this antisemitic tendency of the Gentile nations is found in understanding and endorsing the purposes for Israel revealed in God's special revelation: the Bible. Those nations that ignore or reject God's divine revelation concerning Israel are destined to serve as dupes in the hands of Satan in his ongoing attempt to

thwart the plan of God Almighty for His chosen nation (Ps. 2:1-5; Joel 3:9-12; Zec. 2:8; 12:2-3; Rev. 16:14▸; 19:19▸).[147]

Since the cross, similar characteristics (separateness, exclusive purpose and calling, testifying of God's law) characterize all who believe in Israel's Messiah: Jesus Christ (Mat. 5:10-12; Mark 13:9-13; John 15:18; Php. 1:29; 2Ti. 3:12; Heb. 11:35-37).

3.3.9 - Daniel 3:9

O king, live forever!

See commentary on *Daniel 2:4*.

3.3.10 - Daniel 3:10

See commentary on *Daniel 3:5*.

3.3.11 - Daniel 3:11

See commentary on *Daniel 3:6*.

3.3.12 - Daniel 3:12

certain Jews

See commentary on *Daniel 3:8*.

> The king was reminded that he had given these Jews positions of authority in his administration ("some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon"). Either the astrologers were stressing the magnitude of the Jews' rebellion (even though the king himself had graciously given them positions, they were unappreciative and insubordinate) or they were issuing a veiled assault on the king's judgment.[148]

whom you have set over the affairs of the province

"Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (Dan. 2:49▸). See commentary on *Daniel 2:49*.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

Daniel's companions. For the meanings of their Babylonian names, see commentary on *Daniel 1:7*.

"Now it's interesting that of all the Jews, why is it that only three of them are listed. Maybe the rest of them compromised, just like Christians today."[149] If King Zedekiah was present at the ceremony, as some suggest, then it may be the Jewish king, in contrast to Daniel's companions, bowed before the image to preserve his vassal rule under Nebuchadnezzar. See commentary on *Daniel 3:1*.

One of the most surprising aspects of this verse is what it *doesn't say*: there is no mention of Daniel! One wonders why Daniel is not mentioned among the Jews who defied the king's order, as he certainly would have defied the decree in view of his actions in chapters 1, 2, and 6? As interesting as the various suggestions which have been made in an attempt to explain this omission may be, they remain speculative since the text offers no explanation.

- Daniel's high position, second in command below Nebuchadnezzar, meant his allegiance was unquestioned. There was no need for him to participate in the ceremony.[150]
- Since the king and most other leaders were at the ceremony, Daniel remained in Babylonian to administer affairs in their absence.[151]
- Daniel was absent from Babylon on an affair of state at the time of the ceremony.[152]
- The king purposefully sent Daniel abroad to exempt him from the possibility of facing execution for his religious faithfulness.[153]
- Daniel served within the royal court, not in the province. Only leaders in the province were required to attend.[154]
- Daniel was not the only high-level individual who was absent. For example, the list of invitees makes no mention of the "wise men" over whom Daniel was made administer (Dan. 2:48▸).[155]
- Daniel's reputation in spiritual matters so intimidated the accusers that, although he was present and refused to bow, they dared not include him among the accused.[156]
- Daniel may have been sick, as on other occasions (Dan. 7:28▸; 8:27▸; 10:8▸, 16▸).[157]

Although Daniel avoids the threat of death by fire faced by his companions under the Babylonian regime, he will face a similar threat—death by mauling—under the regime of Medo-Persia. See commentary on *Daniel 6:7*.

If the book of Daniel is a forgery intended to motivate Jews living in the times of the Maccabees, the absence of Daniel in this pivotal chapter concerning the testing of the Jews' faith is inexplicable:

> Ford (p. 108) makes the following observation: "Had the story been the invention that many have suggested; had it originated in the days of the Maccabees to nerve the faithful against Gentile oppression, it is unlikely that the chief hero would have been omitted. Reality transcends fiction, and the very 'incompleteness' of this account testifies to its fidelity."[158]

not paid due regard to you . . . do not serve your gods or worship the gold image

There are three separate accusations made against the three Jews:

> Their accusation against the Judeans in Dan. 3:12▸ consists of three related charges: 1. They do not heed the king's royal authority. ("These men do not pay attention to you, Your Majesty.") 2. They do not serve the king's gods. ("Your gods they do not serve.") 3. They do not bow down to the gold statue. ("The statue of gold that you set up they do not worship.")[160]
>
> Three times in the narrative (verses 12, 14, 18)—once by "certain Chaldeans," once by the king himself, and once by the three accused Hebrews—the worship of the acknowledged deities of the empire is specifically distinguished from the adoring prostration commanded in this instance.[161]

The accusations reflect the complex relationship between the authority of the king and the worship of the patron deities of Babylon. Worship of the image is not strictly equivalent to worshiping the king: the religious and political spheres of the ceremony overlap, but are not identical. In the future worship of Antichrist, there seems to be a more complete identity between worship of the man (Rev. 13:4▸, 8▸) and his associated image (Rev. 13:15▸; 14:11▸). See commentary regarding worship of the image in *Daniel 3:5*.

3.3.13 - Daniel 3:13

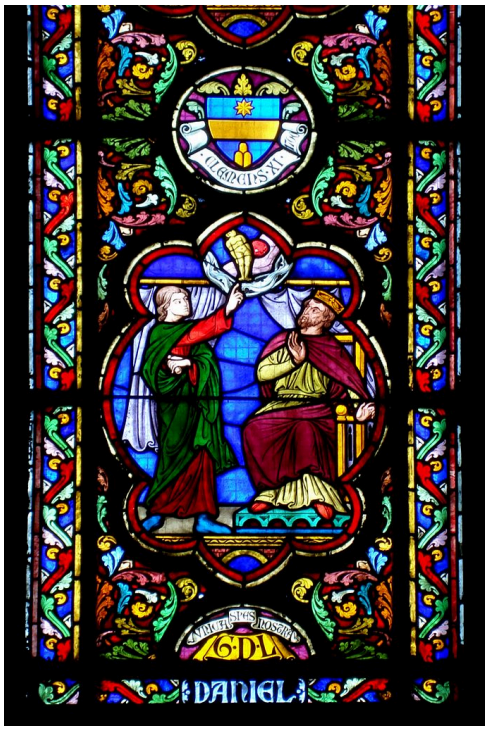
in rage and fury

We have seen before how quickly the king's anger could be aroused leading to serious consequences. "For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon" (Dan. 2:12▸).[162]

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

See commentary on *Daniel 3:12*.

Nebuchadnezzar Imagines an All-Gold Image



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3.3.14 - Daniel 3:14

***Is it* true**

Even though the king was very angry, he afforded the three Jews the chance to explain or reconsider their disobedient act. Perhaps he distrusted their accusers[163] or indicated his respect for their capabilities and previous service to the realm.[164]

3.3.15 - Daniel 3:15

burning fiery furnace

See commentary on this phrase in *Daniel 3:6*.

who *is* the God

Like the leaders of other enemies of Israel such as Pharaoh of Egypt and Sennacherib of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar makes the dangerous mistake of slighting the power of Israel's God:

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2)
>
> Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand? (2K. 18:35)
>
> . . . for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand? . . . As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand (2Chr. 32:15-17)

Nebuchadnezzar's series of victories over his enemies had led him to conclude he and his patron gods were unstoppable. In this, he was like Sennacherib:

> Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand? (Isa. 36:18-20)

Nebuchadnezzar would find out, as Sennacherib had before him, that the God of the universe was listening to his challenge and would respond with judgment (*Daniel 4:30*):

> this is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning [Sennacherib king of Assyria], "Against whom have you raised your voice, And lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 37:22-23)

The foundational shift in Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward Daniel's God exhibited at the end of the previous chapter (Dan. 2:47▸) only seems possible if a significant time period has intervened:

> We are led to inquire what has caused this radical change against the God of the Jews. Was Nebuchadnezzar not sincere when he made his confession to Daniel, or had subsequent events caused him to change his mind? We must not forget that the Dream of Nebuchadnezzar had occurred twenty years before, and that in the meantime, he had taken Jerusalem the second time (B. C. 598) and carried captive the majority of its inhabitants, including many of the sacred vessels of the Temple, and furthermore, he had besieged the city the third time (B. C. 587), took and destroyed it, and burned the Temple, and left the Holy Land in desolation. As Oriental Monarchs believed that their victories were a triumph of their "gods" over the "gods" of their vanquished foes, it would be conclusive evidence to Nebuchadnezzar that his victories over the earthly Capital of Jehovah, and the destruction of the Temple, meant that Jehovah was not the supreme Deity, but that his own God "Merodach" was.[165]

See commentary on the phrase, *an image of gold*, in *Daniel 3:1*.

deliver you from my hands

Deliver is from שֵׁיזִב [*šêziḇ*], "rescue, save, i.e., deliver from physical harm."[166]

The subsequent events of the chapter bring Nebuchadnezzar to answer his own question:

> Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, . . . there is no other God who can deliver like this." (Dan. 3:28-29)

What a contrast between Nebuchadnezzar's haughty attitude in comparison with Darius' expression of faith when Daniel's life is at stake!

> So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." (Dan. 6:16)

3.3.16 - Daniel 3:16

We have no need to answer you

The boldness and ease with which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego respond to Nebuchadnezzar reflects their predetermined resolve to obey God. They had an ongoing relationship with God, wherein they consistently strove to serve Him. Because they lived according to biblical principles, they had no need to deliberate the matter, as would have been necessary if they had practiced situational ethics, as is popular among believers today. Their boldness originated in their confidence before God: they were convinced their situation was sure to gain God's attention (Pr. 28:1). Their ready answer must have been prompted by the Spirit of God (Mat. 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15; Acts 4:13).

in this matter

Matter is פִּתְגָם [*piṯgām*], "decree, edict, formal decision."[167] They accepted the king's authority to issue the decree and resolved to accept God's sovereign hand in whatever results might come from their decision.

3.3.17 - Daniel 3:17

If that *is the case*

The Aramaic is הֵן אִיתַי [*hēn ʾîṯay*], variously translated as: "if it be so" (KJV, NASU); "if the God we serve exists" (HCSB); "if our God whom we are serving exists" (NET). The phrase seems to raise the question of God's existence, but not because the Jews questioned it themselves.[168] They are responding to Nebuchadnezzar's previous challenge, "**who is the god** who will deliver you from my hands" [emphasis mine] (Dan. 3:15▸), where he implies no such god exists.[169]

our God whom we serve

Serve is from פֶּלַח [*pᵉlaḥ*], "serve deity, implying submission and so giving honor and worship,"[170] rendered in the Greek by λατρεύω [*latreuō*] (LXX: to minister or serve in religious duties) and φοβέω [*phobeō*] (OG: to fear, honor).[171]

Serving God means consistently confessing His truth and living according to His principles. Their confession of faith while standing before Nebuchadnezzar, at the risk of their lives, ensured their place among those whom Jesus will confess before the Father:

> Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. (Mat. 10:32-33 cf. Luke 12:8-9)

Their faithfulness was similar to Daniel (Dan. 6:20▸) and Paul (Acts 16:17; 27:23), who likewise found themselves in physical danger due to their consistent testimony and service to God.

is able to deliver

They knew God had the ability to deliver them. Growing up during the reign of the godly King Josiah, their parents had probably taught them of David and how he was delivered from Goliath, against seemingly overwhelming odds.

> Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." (1S. 17:37)

When God rescues His people, it serves as a form of revelation to those who don't yet know him. In this chapter, God's rescue of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego will serve as a witness to Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter six, God's preservation of Daniel in the lions' den will serve as a witness to King Darius of God's power to deliver those who trust in Him:

> I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. (Dan. 6:26-27▸)

3.3.18 - Daniel 3:18

But if not

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were not questioning God's *ability* to save them, but his *willingness* according to His sovereign purpose.[172] As young men, they were among those deported to Babylon. Since then, they had seen Nebuchadnezzar's forces deport more Jews from Jerusalem, ultimately destroying their city and God's temple. As surprising as these events might have appeared to those unacquainted with God, they knew

from Scripture all these things were according to God's sovereign control of history. They believed it would be presumptuous to assume God's purpose mandated their rescue from the current predicament:

> Since the God of Israel did not save Judea, Jerusalem, and even vessels from his own temple from Nebuchadnezzar's "hand" (Dan. 1:1-2), how can these Judeans presume to hope that their God shall save them from the king's "hand" now (Dan. 3:17)?[173]

They faced a challenging decision that put their faith to the ultimate test. They knew their God to be a consuming fire (Ex. 24:17; 33:5; Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; 16:35; Deu. 4:24; 5:25; Heb. 10:31; 12:29). They also knew Nebuchadnezzar's threat of being cast into the furnace was real (Jer. 29:21-23). They elected to face a pagan consuming fire rather than a divine consuming fire (2S. 23:14-15). Their trust in God reflected the attitude of Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

> Faith in God may not translate into victory in every circumstance (see Heb. 11:32-39). To these men the outcome was irrelevant, for what was at stake was not God's ability or their own lives, but their faith and obedience to serve Him regardless of the cost.[174]

As believers, how can we acquire a similar ability to face danger without compromise in our witness for God? A large part of the answer is found in coming to terms with *God's sovereignty*. We need to mature in our Christian walk in order to trust that whatever befalls us is in accord with God's timing and His will for our lives.

> Their answer showed: (a) that they had no doubt of his "ability" to save them if he pleased; (b) that they believed he would do what was best in the case; and (c) that they were entirely willing to commit the whole case into his hands to dispose of it as he chose. Compare Isa. 43:2.[175]

> Two matters stand out for notice. First, the young men recognized that God's will might be different from what they would find pleasant, and they were willing to have it so, without complaining. Too often Christians are not willing to have God's will different from their own, and then do complain most vigorously when it proves to be that way. Second, they did not make their own obedience contingent upon God's doing that which was pleasant to them.[176]

We must let God be God and not assume that whatever He has done for other believers establishes a pattern He must follow in responding to our situation. *His will may differ for each individual*. The Scriptures set forth numerous examples where individual saints, equally loved and valued by God, have entirely different destinies and years of service in their ministries, but *all according to His will*. God allowed Herod to kill James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2), but divinely protected Peter (Acts 12:11). According to God's purpose, John outlives Peter (John 21:20-23).[177] Paul was divinely protected for a time in Rome (2Ti. 4:17), but later suffered martyrdom at the hand of Nero.[178]

In our service before God, we must keep an eternal perspective: this life is not all there is. We must petition God in each situation and then learn to rest in knowing His sovereign will cannot be thwarted:

> Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Php. 4:5-7)

We will not be able to risk our lives in His service unless: (1) we are confident we know the truth (God's Word, the Scriptures); (2) we place a higher priority on the truth than our own life. This, in turn, requires a heavenly and eternal mindset:

> When our danger for the truth's sake is imminent, we should learn to place our life in God's hand, and then bravely and fearlessly devote ourselves to death. . . . For God's glory ought to be more precious to us than a hundred lives. Hence we cannot be witnesses for God without we lay aside all desire of this life, and at least prefer God's glory to it. Meanwhile, we must remark the impossibility of doing this, without the hope of a better life drawing us towards itself. For where there is no promise of any eternal inheritance implanted in our

> hearts, we shall never be torn away from this world. . . . when we understand our inheritance to be in heaven, while we are strangers upon earth, then we put off that clinging to the life of this world to which we are too much devoted.[179]

See commentary on the phrase, *yielded their bodies*, in *Daniel 3:28*.

If King Zedekiah was present at the dedication ceremony, then this passage contrasts the faithfulness of the three Jewish young men against the unfaithfulness of their king.[180]

we do not serve your gods

See *Civil Disobedience and the Christian*.

worship the golden image

To worship the golden image would have been to disobey the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:4-6). The importance of the Second Commandment is evident, not only by its inclusion among the Ten Commandments, but by its repetition within the OT (Ex. 23:24; 34:14; Deu. 5:8-9; Lev. 19:4; 26:1; Jos. 23:6-7, 16; 2K. 17:35). Directing worship anywhere else than to God is *idolatry*, one of the reasons Israel was now in Babylonian captivity:

> There is a strong note of irony here. The Jewish captives of Babylon are in bondage because of their idolatry (see Isaiah 2; 30:19-22; 31:7; Jeremiah 8:19; Ezekiel 5:1-12; 6:1-10; 14:1-5; 16:15-23; 20:39-40; 22:1-4; 23). Israel was commanded not to make or worship idols, on penalty of death. Until their Babylonian captivity, they persisted in their idolatry. Idolatry was one of the reasons for their being in Babylon.[181]

By this time in history, Israel had a well-established pattern of idolatrous practice. Upon leaving Egypt they made a molded calf of gold (Ex. 32:4; Ps. 106:19; Acts 7:41). During the times of the judges, they repeatedly reverted to the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations (Jdg. 2:19). The northern kingdom of Israel worshiped two golden calves, the host of heaven, and foreign gods (2K. 17:16). Their syncretistic religions practices combined a superficial worship and fear of God with idolatry (2K. 17:41). They were continually ensnared by the gods of the nations they were supposed to have supplanted (2Chr. 25:14). Isaiah ridiculed the practice of men who used the same piece of wood for household fuel and to create an idol to bow before in worship (Isa. 44:14-19). By Nebuchadnezzar's time, the Jewish nation had descended into idolatry. Yet, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were among the faithful remnant who refused to bow before idols.

Paul described the universal tendency of man to divert worship due the Creator to idols, the works of their own hands or even the creation itself:

> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Rom. 1:20-25) [emphasis mine]

Our God is unique. He, alone, is the Creator: all else is creature or creation and may not be worshiped (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). Only God is worthy to receive worship. This worship—due God alone—is Satan's ultimate desire:

> For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will be like the Most High**.' (Isa. 14:13-14) [emphasis mine]

> And [Satan] said to Him, "All these things I will give You **if You will fall down and worship me**." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " (Mat. 4:9-10) [emphasis mine]

Satan's desire to redirect worship from God to himself finds its final expression in the reign of the Antichrist:

> Then the king shall do according to his own will: **he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god**, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. **He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all**. (Dan. 11:36-37▸) [emphasis mine]

> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and **exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God**. (2Th. 2:3-4) [emphasis mine]

> So **they worshiped the dragon** who gave authority to the beast; **and they worshiped the beast**, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4▸) [emphasis mine]

> **All who dwell on the earth will worship him**, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8▸) [emphasis mine]

> And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and **causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast**, whose deadly wound was healed. (Rev. 13:12▸) [emphasis mine]

A refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to worship the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar prefigures the overcomers in the Great Tribulation who are rewarded for their refusal to worship the Antichrist:

> And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, **who had not worshiped the beast or his image**, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4▸) [emphasis mine]

See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

3.3.18.1 - Civil Disobedience and the Christian

The refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to worship the image is one of several examples within Scripture where God sanctions disobedience of an authority. Great care is needed in interpreting and applying these Scriptural examples of disobedience to our own lives.

First, we must be sure the passage we interpret in support of disobeying an authority is truly *endorsing* that course of action. One problem here is the even-handed way the inspired Scriptures accurately record the failings of God's people. A passage relating ungodly actions on the part of the people of God can be misinterpreted as endorsing a practice for us to follow. Where the Scriptures *accurately record human sin* (e.g., lying: Gen. 27:24; Ex. 1:17-19; Jos. 2:5; 1S. 21:2, 13; 27:10; 2S. 17:20; 2K. 10:19), we must not take this as God's implicit approval of such behavior. This would amount to God endorsing practices *contrary to His own law*, in the supposed service and advancement of truth. To do so is inconsistent with everything God has revealed concerning righteousness and His desire that we should be holy as He is holy (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1Pe. 1:15-16). Where the Scriptures record ungodly behavior by God's people leading to favorable results, the true message of the passage is not that God endorses sin, but that sin cannot thwart His will and covenantal faithfulness—*even the sin of believers*.[182] Confusion on this point has led to promotion of a brand of "Christian situational ethics," suggesting the believer must weigh the cost of telling the truth against deceptive tactics and take upon himself the responsibility for manipulating consequences in a misguided attempt to achieve God's will through ungodly behavior! Godly behavior by believers must rest upon the rock of *principles*, not the shifting sand of *pragmatism*:

> Heroes were they, and models for all young men and all others when matters of conscience and faithfulness to God and truth are at stake. A true man in a case of clear duty will never sell himself for any price. He cannot be bought for gold or place or favor. No bribes can allure him, no sophistries can impose on him, no fires or furnaces can turn him. His soul is welded to unchanging Omnipotence, and nothing can break down his integrity.[183]

How different would their response have been if they had analyzed the situation to try and determine the best (generally defined as the least problematic) course of action? This is the slippery slope of rationalization and compromise! Calvin recognizes the temptation of embracing situational ethics:

> "Behold! we are armed with some power in favor of our brethren; now what barbarity, what cruelty will be exercised against them, if the enemies of the religion which they profess succeed us? For as far as they can, they will overthrow and blot out our race and the very remembrance of piety. Is it not better for us to yield for a time to the tyranny and violent edict of the king than to leave our places empty?[184]

Second, we must be sure the situation merits disobedience because it would *personally* place us in a position of denying God's law.

> These godly men do not pretend that he is a false king because he sets up and enforces idolatry. For the Christian, the question is not about the king, but how he ought to behave *himself*. It is not his business to meddle with others. He is called to walk, relying on God, in obedience and patience.[185]

> Whenever a believer feels obliged to disobey his government, he must be sure it is not because the government has denied him his rights but because it has denied him God's rights.[186]

Another factor to bear in mind is the various books of the Bible were written in different historical contexts and settings with their primary application to different peoples of God. As a result, *not all passages apply equally to every believer in every historical setting*. We must be careful to handle the Scriptures rightly, discerning the place we occupy God's plan (e.g., the New Testament Church) distinct from other peoples and times (e.g., Old Testament Israel). Otherwise, we can make the mistake of risking confrontation or physical danger for principles that apply to other believers in another historical setting (e.g., keeping the Sabbath).

In this particular case, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were asked to violate a foundational, universal, commandment in Scripture: included in the "top ten" spoken audibly to Israel (Ex. 20:1) and subsequently written by the finger of God upon stone tablets (Ex. 24:12; 31:18). This commandment applies to all believers in every age and geographical setting:

> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; **you shall not bow down to them nor serve them**. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Ex. 20:4-6) [emphasis mine]

It is important to recognize which aspect of the second commandment Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would have violated in acquiescing to Nebuchadnezzar's decree. The three Jews did not *make* the image—this was the king's transgression. Even though they would not have endorsed the king's action, his constructing the image had no direct bearing upon them personally—it demanded no response on their part. The problem came when the king commanded that *they* bow down to the image. This is where the situation crossed the line: where God's law required their *personal* disobedience.

3.3.18.1.1 - Higher Law

The principle guiding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is referred to in our day as *higher law*.[188]

Scripture teaches believers are subject to God-established civil authority (Rom. 13:1-7; Tit. 3:1; 1Pe. 2:13, 17; cf. Gen. 9:6; Deu. 17:9-12; Ecc. 8:12). Scripture also teaches God has established certain laws governing individual behavior that no lower authority, such as a government, may contravene in the life of a believer. When a lower authority enacts a law which would *force* the Christian to violate God's law, then the higher law takes precedence and the believer must disobey the lower, civil law. Where these laws conflict, it is because the state has taken upon itself things that are God's alone:

Man's Law or God's Law?

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> [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's] care was to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." They were in the very spirit of that word of Christ before it was given.[189]

> When human government commands something contrary to what God commands, the saint of God must obey God rather than man. . . . when the saint of God disobeys human government in order to obey God, he must take the consequences of disobeying the government no matter what the results.[190]

Where higher and lower law differ, and impinge directly upon the individual, the Christian must carefully distinguish between dutiful subjection to the God-appointed ruler and subjection to God Himself:

> The man of faith, subject indeed to the king, as we have seen, because appointed of God, is not subject to the false god which the king sets up, denying the true God who gave him his authority, and who is still acknowledged by the man of faith.[191]

Scripture provides numerous examples of this principle at work. In every case, the people of God are called to obey God's (higher) law rather than man's (lower) law.

- The Hebrew midwives disobeyed Pharaoh's command to kill the male Jews (Ex. 1:16-21).[192]
- Moses' parents disobeyed Pharaoh's command to kill their male baby, Moses (Ex. 2:2). This act was referred to as an act of faith (Heb. 11:23).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow before the image King Nebuchadnezzar had set up (Dan. 3:13▸).
- Daniel refused to stop his daily prayers to God (Dan. 6:10▸).
- Mordecai refused to bow before Haman (Est. 3:2-4).
- Peter and John defied the command of the Jewish religious leaders to no longer speak of or teach about Jesus. They reasoned, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge" (Acts 4:19).
- Peter and the apostles defied the same command of the Jewish council a second time, responding, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
- Believers refuse to worship the beast and his image during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 13:15▸; 15:2▸; 20:4▸).

When evaluating a situation to determine whether it warrants our disobedience in order to to follow God's (higher) law, we must remain vigilant concerning our tendency to rationalize and misapply the principle of higher law for our own ends. On several occasions, we have heard Christians attempt to use the principle of higher law to avoid responsibility for paying taxes to the government. Their reasoning is as follows: "Because the state has enacted a law contravening God's higher law (e.g., legalizing abortion), I am justified in withholding payment of taxes to the state." But how does this square with Paul's teaching concerning our duty to the state, written at a time when the Jews were subject to the epitome of ungodly governments: *Nero's Rome* (Rom. 13:1-7)?[193] This argument is flawed: although the government has passed an ungodly law, the *individual believer* has not been forced to submit to its devastating results. The analogous situation here would have been if Nebuchadnezzar had

only erected the image (breaking God's law), but had not decreed the Jews bow down before it in worship. If that had been the case, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would have had no Scriptural justification for embarking upon the path of civil disobedience.

3.3.19 - Daniel 3:19

Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury

"Recognition must be given to the fact, too, that he had expended enormous sums of money and energy to make this occasion resplendent, and now these three seemingly were spoiling it."[194]

the expression on his face changed

Expression is צֶלֶם [*ṣᵉlēm*], the same word described the golden *image* Nebuchadnezzar erected (Dan. 3:1▸). Unlike the glorious and serene image of gold, possibly in king's likeness, Nebuchadnezzar's visage was disrupted by the godly stance of the Jews. This was a sure sign of trouble ahead: "As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it. In the light of the king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain" (Pr. 16:14-15).

heat the furnace

From their extensive building projects, the Babylonian's had extensive experience building furnaces which could be fired to high temperatures:

> Massive furnaces must have been used to fire the estimated fifteen million kiln-fired, as well as glazed, bricks required for Nebuchadrezzar's numerous building operations. These were usually fired to about 850-950 centigrade [approx. 1500-1700 Fahrenheit] but a higher temperature could be obtained by the use of wood fires or the equally available bitumen from Hit.[195]

See commentary on the phrase, *burning fiery furnace*, in *Daniel 3:6*.

seven times

Seven times is חַד־שְׁבְעָה [*ḥad–šiḇʿâ*]. "The idiom חַר־שְׁבְעָה [*ḥar–šiḇʿâ*], 'one-seven,' is a ratio (one to seven) that serves as a multiplicative, meaning 'seven times.' "[196] The phrase is rendered as ἑπταπλασίως [*heptaplasiōs*], *sevenfold*, within the LXX. This is likely a figure of speech meaning "fully hot," "as hot as possible."[197]

> He was not literally requiring the fire to be 7 times hotter as a gauge would indicate, or requiring 7 times as long to heat, or 7 times the amount of fuel (cf. v. 6, "cast immediately"). The king in anger means "intensely hot," using "seven" figuratively to denote completeness (as Lev. 26:18-28; Pr. 6:31; 24:16), similar to "ten" in Dan. 1:20▸. Cf. "exceedingly hot" (Dan. 3:22▸). A stone or brick furnace with an air draft could be made hotter by more fuel and air.[198]

This command to intensify the conditions within the furnace would have a sobering affect upon the Jewish men as they considered the very real possibility that God might not intervene in their situation.[199]

3.3.20 - Daniel 3:20

commanded certain mighty men of valor

The king's angry reaction and decision to employ his strongest men in carrying out the penalty will prove ill-advised and cause the loss of his soldiers. Such is the folly of decisions made in anger (Pr. 14:17, 29; 25:28; Ecc. 7:9; Mat. 2:16).

> And in one stupid decision, made by his emotions in the fury of a moment, he is going to lose some very valuable people. And this is a picture of a man who has lost control of himself. He has not subdued the earth, he hasn't even begun to subdue his own emotional patterns.[200]

3.3.21 - Daniel 3:21

bound

Their clothing was not stripped from them before being thrown into the furnace, as would have normally been the case. This may have been due to the urgency of Nebuchadnezzar's angry command.[201] Or it could have been intentional: so their clothing would provide additional flammable material hastening their death.[202]

in their coats, their trousers, their turbans and their *other* garments

"This is another case where the lack of information concerning articles of wearing apparel makes the identification of the different items quite a problem. No two commentators or lexicographers seem to see eye to eye in the matter."[203]

were cast into

We can only imagine what might have been the consternation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego as they were carried toward the furnace. *Would* God intervene? If so, *when*? As they drew closer and closer to the furnace, perhaps the peace of God's Spirit enabled them to remain calm as it became abundantly clear God had elected *not* to deliver them from being cast into the furnace!

> Though the three friends had bravely asserted their willingness to die in this way, rather than bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image, still the actual experience of being bound and carried to the furnace would have been horrible. In making their earlier statement, well meant as it was, they no doubt hoped that God would bring the deliverance. But God apparently was not doing so. They would have to suffer the terrifying experience of the furnace.[204]

> No help from heaven appears for them. This was a living and remarkably efficacious proof of their faithfulness.[205]

Their consistent stand as martyrs for their faith was tested to the point of actual entry into the flames!

burning fiery furnace

"The furnace involved was almost certainly one of the many large kilns used for firing the facing bricks needed to make important structures more durable. Jeremiah 29:22 records another instance where two men were burned to death at Nebuchadnezzar's command . . . there are also extrabiblical references to such practices in Mesopotamia."[206] See commentary on *burning fiery furnace* in *Daniel 3:6*.

Teaching God's word can sometimes be a daunting, difficult, and unpleasant task. There are times when, with great reluctance, we are compelled to discuss unwelcome topics and historical situations of immense pain and hardship. It is with such trepidation we hazard to comment upon the topic before us: the unique relationship of the Jews and *suffering by fire*. It is impossible to meditate upon the events of this chapter without bringing to mind the disturbing historical parallel between the "burning fiery furnace" constructed by Nebuchadnezzar and the ovens the Nazis used during the holocaust.[207] Of all the peoples of history, no other nation has seen approximately one-third of their number perish at the hands of their enemies—most having been incinerated in

ovens.[208] How does one deal with this troubling correspondence between Daniel 3 and the fate of so many Jews during World War II?

Many approach the subject in a way we ourselves were sorely tempted: by silently passing over the unsavory topic. However, the responsibility of teaching the full counsel of God means there are times we must sensitively probe difficult topics in an attempt to understand them in the light of God's revelation.

There are two aspects of this delicate subject that must be seen in light of the Scriptures:

1. Satan opposes God's purpose for the nation Israel and employs spiritual forces in opposition to the survival of the Jews (Rev. 7:4-8; 12:4, 17).[209]
2. The OT predicts the severe experiences Israel would face if she disobeyed her God (Lev. 16:14-46; Deu. 28:15-68).

Perhaps the most terrifying passages within the OT are those describing the curses God promised would befall Israel in disobedience. Who can read these passages without considering their relationship to the long history of Jewish suffering?

> But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. . . (Lev. 26:14ff.)
>
> But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: . . . (Deu. 28:15ff.)

The suffering of Israel at the hands of her enemies in the OT is living proof of the reality of these ominous passages given through Moses. As history progressed, disobedience would intensify. In rejecting the Prophet Whom Moses predicted (Deu. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23), their Messiah Jesus Christ, Israel's disobedience reached a climax reflected by an equally terrifying passage from the NT:

> Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "**His blood be on us and on our children**." (Mat. 27:22-25 cf. Luke 23:25-31) [emphasis mine]

Although responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus is not solely Israel's,[210] it is impossible for the student of the Bible to view Israel's history without considering the suffering these judgment passages promise for disobedience to God. As difficult to accept as it may be, God's Word indicates this historic pattern will prevail until, following the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7 cf. Jer. 30:24; Deu. 4:30; Dan. 12:1, 7; Mat. 24:21; Mark 13:19), Israel will ultimately acknowledge her Messiah (Mat. 23:39; Luke 13:35; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:26-29).

> Israel must, indeed, be dumb if one asks them today: Tell me, pray: How can it be that the Eternal sent the fathers out of their land into captivity in Babylon for only seventy years, on account of all the abominations and idolatry by which they for centuries defiled the Holy Land:—and now Israel has been dispersed among all peoples for over eighteen hundred years, and Jerusalem, the city of the great King, is trodden down by the nations until this day? What, then, is the great and terrible blood-guiltiness which perpetually prevents you from dwelling in peace in the land of your fathers?—But Israel is not willing to know! And yet it is precisely its sin against its Messiah that is indeed the root of Israel's misery.[211]

Another difficult topic related to the holocaust is the Scriptural teaching concerning the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus.[212] In Daniel 3, we find the principle of the preservation of the Jewish nation in fulfillment of the plan of God. Yet, it cannot be said that every Jew who tragically perished during the holocaust received eternal life (Rom. 10:1-4). Only the faithful remnant, those who placed their faith in Messiah Jesus were saved (Amos 9:8-10; Zec. 13:8-9; Rom. 9:6, 27; 11:5; Gal. 6:16).

See *Preservation of Israel*.

3.3.22 - Daniel 3:22

flame of the fire killed those men

The furnace had an opening at the top into which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were cast. As they fell in, the flames erupted, burning their captors to death.[213] "The righteous is delivered from trouble, And it comes to the wicked instead" (Pr. 11:8).

> Nothing can be more probable than this. It was necessary to approach to the very mouth of the furnace in order to cast them in, and it is very conceivable that a heated furnace would belch forth such flames, or throw out such an amount of heat, that this could not be done but at the peril of life.[214]

Here we find an important principle: those under authority generally suffer from the poor decisions of their leader —whether the leader be a king, master, father, or husband.

3.3.23 - Daniel 3:23

fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace

"Paradoxical as it was, the soldiers who fell outside, where there was no fire, died because of the fire; while those who fell inside, where the fire raged, continued to live without harm."[215]

"At this point the Greek translations insert the 'Prayer of Azariah' and the 'Song of the Three Youths' with some introductory verses."[216] "It is between these verses that the apocryphal Song of the Three Children, as it is called, has been inserted by St. Jerome and others; but with this note: *Quae sequuntur in Hebraeis voluminibus non reperi*; 'What follows I have not found in the Hebrew books.' "[217] See *Additions to Greek Versions*.

3.3.24 - Daniel 3:24

Following upon *The Song of the Three Children*, the LXX resumes at verse 24 with the additional inserted phrase, "And Nabuchodonosor heard them singing praises . . ."[218] See *Additions to Greek Versions*.

See commentary on *Daniel 3:25*.

3.3.25 - Daniel 3:25

four men loose

Nebuchadnezzar not only remarked there were *four* men in the furnace, but they were all *loose*. Perhaps the means of their binding was more substantial than rope and would be expected to endure the high temperature of the furnace.[220]

See the discussion below regarding the identity of the fourth individual.

walking in the midst of the fire

The Fiery Furnace

219

As is evident from the picture of the *Old Lime Kiln*, smelting furnaces could be quite spacious. "The furnace being large enough to walk in, and where they took their walks as in a garden; nor were they concerned to come out of it; nor uneasy at being in it; the violence of the fire being quenched."[221] "A picture of the godly, unhurt and free (John 8:36), prefiguring the godly Jewish remnant in similar plight enjoying Christ's presence and deliverance through the furnace experience of the Great Tribulation, as Isaiah predicted (Isa. 43:1-2)."[222] See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

God's protection of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the midst of the fire illustrates God's *Preservation of Israel*.

like the Son of God

The phrase rendered *like the Son of God* is לְבַר־אֱלָהִין [*lᵉḇar–ʾĕlāhîn*], which lacks the definite article ("the").

> The article is not prefixed to the word "son," and the language would apply to anyone who might properly be called a son of God. The Vulgate has literally rendered it, "like to A son of God" - *similis filio Dei*; the Greek in the same way - ὁμοια υἱω θεου [*homoia huiō theou*]; the Syriac is like the Chaldee; Castellio renders it, *quartus formam habet Deo nati similem* - "the fourth has a form resembling one born of God;" Coverdale "the fourth is like an angel to look upon;" Luther, more definitely, *und der vierte ist gleich, als ware er ein Sohn der Gotter* - "and the fourth as if he might be "a" son of the gods." It is clear that the authors of none of the other versions had the idea which our translators supposed to be conveyed by the text, and which implies that the Babylonian monarch "supposed" that the person whom he saw was the one who afterward became incarnate for our redemption.[223]

Several commentators indicate the Aramaic word אֱלָהִין [*ʾĕlāhîn*] can only be plural, and should therefore be rendered as *gods*.[224] Others disagree.[225] Various early translations equivocate as to how the phrase should be translated.[226] Identifying the individual as the unique Son of God (Jesus) would have to be based on other factors than the text itself, which admits of varied interpretations. It appears the Aramaic is saying the individual appeared "god-like" from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective: "like a son of the gods" (NASU, ESV, HCSB, NIV84); "like that of a god" (NET); "like a divine being" (TNK).[227]

> There are two inquiries which arise in regard to this expression: one is, what was the idea denoted by the phrase as used by the king, or who did he take this personage to be? the other, who he actually was?[228]

In favor of identifying the individual as an angel is Nebuchadnezzar's statement in verse 28 where he refers to the individual as an angel and the numerous passages in the OT where angels are referred to as *sons of God* (Gen. 6:2-4; Deu. 32:8;[229] Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Also supporting this identification is the subsequent delivery of Daniel in the lions' den which is said to be by an angel (Dan. 6:22▸).[230] This is the view taken by some commentators.[231]

On the other hand, some passages in the OT refer to a unique individual as *God's Son* (singular), who appears to differ from the angels (Ps. 2:7, 12; Pr. 30:4; cf. Dan. 7:13). Many Christian commentators take this individual to be one and the same as *the* Angel of the Lord—the mysterious figure who speaks in the first-person for God and even receives worship (Gen. 16:7-14; 22:11-15; 31:11-13; 32:28-30; Ex. 3:2-5; 23:20-23; Num. 22:35; Deu. 4:37; Jos. 5:13-15; Jdg. 6:11-24; 13:21-23; Hos. 12:3-5).[232] Although it is beyond the scope of our treatment to expound on this topic at length, many believe this special angel was a preincarnate representation of the Second Person of the Trinity: Jesus Christ.[233]

In any event, it seems as if Nebuchadnezzar merely saw the individual as a "god-like being," terminology that could also describe an angel.

3.3.25.1 - Preservation of Israel

The preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego within the furnace is a literal fulfillment of a promise given by Isaiah approximately 100 years earlier:

Flag of Israel

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> But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, **O Jacob**, And He who formed you, **O Israel**: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. **When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you**. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life. (Isa. 43:1-4) [emphasis mine]

This promise of preservation is addressed to *Jacob*, whom God named *Israel* (Gen. 32:28). This is one of several passages containing very strong promises that God will preserve *the Jewish nation*. While it is a general principle found throughout Scripture that God will preserve all who trust in Him (even if they may face martyrdom, Luke 21:16-19), we must not miss to whom these particular passages are addressed: *Jacob, Israel, the Jews*:

> For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, **O sons of Jacob**. (Mal. 3:6) [emphasis mine]

> Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the **seed of Israel** shall also cease From being **a nation** before Me forever." Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all **the seed of Israel** For all that they have done, says the LORD." (Jer. 31:35-37) [emphasis mine]

> 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the **house of Israel and to the house of Judah**: In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days **Judah** will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the **Levites**, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.' " And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the **Levites**, the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply **the descendants of David** My servant and the **Levites** who minister to Me.' " Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, "Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, 'The two families which the LORD has chosen, He has also

> cast them off'? Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be **a nation** before them. "Thus says the LORD: 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away **the descendants of Jacob** and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over **the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.' " (Jer. 33:14-26) [emphasis mine]

These mighty promises do not concern a generic "people of God" but make specific mention of Jacob, Israel, Judah, Levites, the Jewish nation, and the belief by her enemies that God has cast them off. Not so! "Behold, He who keeps **Israel** shall neither slumber nor sleep." [emphasis mine] (Ps. 121:4)

These strong promises to preserve Israel emphasize God's intention to support His chosen nation.[235] The promises also imply history will be characterized by repeated attempts to displace Israel from the plan of God. Why else would such strong declarations be necessary? Israel's history amply illustrates the need for these promises by God. "Of ten measures of suffering sent by God upon the world, nine fell on Jerusalem."[236] "Many events in Jewish history are too terrible to be believed, but nothing in Jewish history is too terrible to have happened."[237] The Jews have endured unending persecution, often simply for being Jews:

> In *The Secret War Against the Jews*, Mark Aarons and John Loftus write: 'For more than twenty centuries [Jews] have . . . been persecuted, uprooted, and annihilated. [Yes] many [other] groups have suffered grievously at the hands of tyrants, but there is a crucial difference . . . . In each of these cases, the genocide was intended to serve a deeper purpose—the conquest of territory, the acquisition of wealth, the enlargement of political power. . . . In contrast, the genocide of the Jewish people was not . . . attempted in order to achieve a more fundamental purpose. It was the fundamental purpose. This is what makes the Nazi Holocaust unique.' [John Loftus and Mark Aarons, *The Secret War Against the Jews: How Western Espionage Betrayed the Jewish People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994)][238]

The continued existence of the Jews after a long and unique history of persecution testifies to the preservation of Israel against all odds, a point which has not been lost on observers of history:

> The great Prussian Emperor Frederick often would test his chaplain with theological questions. Frederick, however, said he did not have time for long answers and explanations. He wanted simple answers that he could comprehend quickly. One day he asked his chaplain if he could provide simple and succinct evidence for the truth of the Bible. Frederick asked if the chaplain could provide evidence in just one word. The wise chaplain responded that he could do just that. 'What is the magical word?' Frederick asked. The chaplain replied, 'Israel, your majesty. The people of Israel.'[239]

> I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of the people, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint. . . . According to the materialistic . . . criterion, this people ought long ago to have perished. Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews . . . their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history; all these point to the peculiar and mysterious foundations of their destiny. [Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles, Centenary Press, 1936), pp. 86-87][240]

> No nation under heaven could touch Israel for ill without bringing down upon them the wrath of almighty God. The pages of history are strewn with the wreckage of nations who, though great in the eyes and councils of the world, incurred the just wrath of an outraged God. While God reserved the right to judge His chosen people for their sins, He also reserves the right to judge those who spitefully treat the Jews, and thus bring reproach on the One who made an everlasting covenant with Israel.[241]

> The survival of the people of Israel and of their culture over three millennia and in almost impossible conditions requires an explanation. . . . we have considered some biblical evidence for Israel's uniqueness. We have seen that Paul affirmed this uniqueness, grounding it in their special election which was not rescinded despite the refusal of many of the Jews to recognize Jesus as their Messiah.[242]

> The laws which govern the existence of many other peoples are in part explicable by the philosophy of history. But Israel's development mocks at all explanation. For, in spite of everything, Israel is Jehovah's people, and the Lord its God is a God Who hides Himself (Isa. 45:15). Every Jew is a walking mystery.[243]
>
> Jewish history is the visible, empirical act of revelation. It demonstrates to all who want to see that the God of Israel is not a philosophical concept, but the living God. [Jacob Jocz, *A Theology of Election*, p. 3][244]

See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.

3.3.26 - Daniel 3:26

the mouth of the burning fiery furnace

The mouth of the burning furnace refers to the ground-level opening, through which those in the furnace could be seen. See the discussion concerning the furnace in *Daniel 3:6*.

Most High God

Most High God is אֱלָהָא עִלָּיָא [*'ĕlāhā 'illâ'*]. Elsewhere in Scripture, this phrase is a declaration of God as the only true God, in contrast to lesser gods that are not gods at all.[245] At this stage in Nebuchadnezzar's life, it merely means: "the highest of the gods" among the numerous gods recognized by Babylon's pagan culture.[246]

Nebuchadnezzar's declaration seems laudable and convincing. After all, he witnessed an incredible miracle by the God of the Jews. Yet Scripture bears ample witness that miracles are not sufficient, in themselves, to turn a person toward God (Num. 14:11; Deu. 29:2; Ps. 95:9; 106:13; Mat. 16:1; 27:42; Mark 8:11-12; Luke 16:31; John 12:37). As was the case in the previous chapter, the additional revelation of God provided to Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter proves insufficient to bring him to faith. Further humbling and trials await him in *Daniel 4*.

> The king believes that Jehovah has distinguished Himself and displayed power that is greater than any other god was capable of displaying; but it does not even remotely occur to the king to consider Him the only true God and all others mere creations of human fancy.[247]
>
> This address does not go beyond the circle of heathen ideas. He does not call the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego the only true God, but only the most high God, the chief of the gods, just as the Greeks called their Zeus ὁ ὕψιστος θεός [*o hypsistos theos*].[248]

come out

One wonders how long the men would have remained in the furnace if Nebuchadnezzar had not beckoned them to come out? The protection afforded by God was so comprehensive they were completely comfortable in the midst of the flames! "They had no desire to leave the 'Furnace,' for they had therein the companionship of the 'Son of God,' and they would rather be in the 'Furnace' with the 'Son of God' than in the Palace with the king."[249]

3.3.27 - Daniel 3:27

the fire had no power . . . the smell of fire was not on them

"Without doubt the question 'What god is there who can deliver you out of my hand?' (Dan. 3:15▸) had been dramatically answered."[250]

Like the burning bush which was not consumed (Ex. 3:2),[251] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego emerged from the furnace without the slightest evidence of having been in the midst of a fire.[252] Daniel will soon experience

similar supernatural protection during his night in the lions' den, "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God" (Dan. 6:23).

God's promise to preserve believers through the fire (cf. Isa. 43:2) was a source of comfort for the English Protestant reformer Thomas Bilney on the night before his martyrdom:

> The night before his death [in 1531], he was eating a hearty meal when Matthew Parker and some friends came to visit him. They tried to comfort him before the horrible ordeal of the following day, but Bilney said nothing. When he had finished eating his meal, he slipped down the bench to where they were sitting, put his open Bible on the table beside him, held his index finger over the flame of the candle and burned it to the bone. He looked at his stunned friends and pointed to Isaiah 43:2 - "When though walkest through fire, thou shalt not be burned."[253]

The preservation and comfort these godly men experienced in the midst of the fiery furnace contrasts with those, in the time of the end, who bow in worship of the beast and his image:

> Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (Rev. 14:9-11)

3.3.28 - Daniel 3:28

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

Nebuchadnezzar's response to the miracle appears genuine, but the following chapter exposes the superficial nature of his repentance. "When the impious feel God's power, they do not dare to proceed with obstinacy against him, but wish to appease him by a false repentance, without putting off their natural disposition."[254]

sent His angel

Angel is from מַלְאָךְ [*mal'ak*], "angel, a class of supernatural being, sent as messengers to do God's biding."[255] See the commentary regarding the identity of the angel in *Daniel 3:25*.

who trusted in Him

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego evidence *a complete and utter trust in God*: they remained steadfast in their decision to the point of actual committal to the flames of the furnace. Their remarkable trust in God furnished a *testimony* (Greek μαρτυρία [*martyria*], from which we derive *martyr*) to Nebuchadnezzar. They did not die a martyr's death, but they walked a martyr's path to overcome Nebuchadnezzar and his decree to worship the image (1Jn. 5:4-5; Rev. 2:10-11; 12:11; 15:2).

When one reads the accounts of the martyrs of church history, one is struck by the composure they showed in the midst of terrifying and painful situations. In the midst of their persecution, they found the secret place of the Most High (Ps. 31:19-20; 61:2-4; 91:1-3; Isa. 26:3; Col. 3:2-4).

> He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." Surely He shall deliver you. (Ps. 91:1-3)

frustrated the king's word

Frustrated the king's word is וּמִלַּ֥ת מַלְכָּ֖א שַׁנִּ֑יו [*wûmillaṯ malkā šannîw*], literally: *and the decree of the king they changed/altered*.

They applied the principle of higher law: when man's (lower) law collides with God's (higher) law, the higher law must be obeyed. This principle is binding on all Christians in all times and all places, *regardless of the consequences*. In this instance, the results were ideal: their civil disobedience was vindicated and the lower law of the state was overthrown. Unfortunately, history reveals this is rarely the result.

See *Civil Disobedience and the Christian* and the commentary on *Daniel 3:29*.

yielded their bodies

They gave up their lives rather than disobey God's command against serving or worshiping any other god. The consistent teaching of Scripture is that our relationship with God is more precious than life itself.

It is one thing to *read* this in the Scriptures, but it is quite another thing to consider how we ourselves might respond if asked to *walk it out* in this life! As difficult as it may seem, we cannot walk the path of true disciples without considering the possibility we ourselves, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego so long ago, may be asked to yield our bodies in the service of God. Perhaps we live in a time and place where Christianity has gained positive influence and acceptance within the culture. If so, praise the Lord! Yet, this is not the case for other believers in other places, even in our time.

> And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. **Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise**. (Heb. 11:32-39) [emphasis mine]

God's Word also tells us the world will pass through a time of great darkness before the bright and glorious dawn of the Millennium. (See *Foreshadowing the Great Tribulation*.) During that time, many of God's people will share the dilemma of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Having overcome the world through faith in the True Overcomer, Jesus Christ (1Jn. 5:4-5), believers are called to obey and serve Him whether in *life* (Rom. 12:1) or in *death*:

> And **do not fear those who kill the body** but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mat. 10:28 cf. Luke 12:4-5). [emphasis mine]

> You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and **they will put some of you to death**. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. **But not a hair of your head shall be lost**. **By your patience possess your souls**. (Luke 21:16-19) [emphasis mine]

> Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**. (Rev. 2:10▸). [emphasis mine]

> Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And **they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.**" (Rev. 12:10-11▸). [emphasis mine]

Thankfully, God has given us numerous examples, in whose footsteps we are to follow, if need be: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; Daniel (Dan. 6:16▸); Esther (Est. 4:16); Paul (Acts 20:23-24; 21:13-14; Php. 1:19-20; 2:17; 2Ti. 4:6); and even Jesus (Mat. 26:39; Luke 22:42).[256]

3.3.29 - Daniel 3:29

I make a decree

The original decree to worship the image would have proven disastrous to the general Jewish populace captive within Babylon. Who can doubt that the king's command for the leaders to bow before the image would have eventually been imposed upon the common man? Such a result would have been contrary to the promise of God given through Jeremiah that the Jews would prosper in captivity:

> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters-that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. (Jer. 29:4-7)

The example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego reveals how God may achieve His ends using people who have no real knowledge of the significance of their acts of simple obedience. The willingness of three Jewish men to perish rather than compromise their faith was a key element in God's plan to protect the Jews while under Babylonian rule. Not only was the previous decree of forced worship overturned, but the king made a new decree affording even greater protection for the Jews by the public respect paid to their God.

> Now you see how God used this incident, because the Jews are going to be down there for 70 years, but this proclamation would enable them to practice their religion, which previously it would have been impossible for them to practice as long as they are down there.[257]

The precise motivation behind Nebuchadnezzar's favorable decree is difficult to ascertain. It may have been a reaction out of fear of offending a god who had proven so capable in the fire.[258] Or perhaps he was concerned to restore the reputation of the three Jews.[259] As events shall soon show, this decree lacks the sincerity of the one made by Darius, ruler of the subsequent Medo-Persian Empire, in response to the miraculous preservation of Daniel in the lions' den (Dan. 6:26-27▸).

the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

When Daniel was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the previous chapter, Nebuchadnezzar had responded, *Truly **your** God is the God of gods* (Dan. 2:47▸). Here, he calls God, *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego*. In neither situation did he acknowledge the claim this powerful God had on his own life.

> How many people there are in the world just like that! They would not say anything against God our Father nor His Son the Lord Jesus Christ; they have a certain reverence in their hearts for God; they think of Him as their mother's God perhaps, or the God of their fathers; but they cannot cry, "*My* Lord and *my* God," as Thomas did after he saw the print of the nails. . . . Nebuchadnezzar owns His *power*, but he does not yet own His claims upon him.[260]

See commentary on the phrase, *Most High God* in *Daniel 3:26*.

there is no other God who can deliver like this

If Nebuchadnezzar was convinced of the superiority of the God Who had rescued the Jews,[261] his decree stops short of acknowledging Him as the One True God.[262] He has not yet made the immense leap from polytheism to

monotheism.

3.3.30 - Daniel 3:30

promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

Promoted is הַצְלַח [*haṣlaḥ*], hifil stem, "elevate in position in the government; formally, cause to prosper."[263] It appears they were promoted to positions of higher influence in the government, although Barnes suggests the word simply indicates they were made to prosper and does not necessarily indicate a promotion in their position.[264]

Whatever the case may be, their promotion by Nebuchadnezzar served to advance the cause of their Jewish countrymen for the remaining years of the Babylonian captivity. Following the Great Tribulation, those who remained true to God are promoted to positions within the millennial government:

> And **I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them**. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived **and reigned with Christ** for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4▸) [emphasis mine]

3.3.31 - Lessons from Chapter 3

The third chapter of Daniel contains numerous lessons we can apply in our own lives.

Lessons for Living

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- **Persecution Serves God's Purpose** - In our Christian walk, we can become comfortable in the world and begin to forget we are not of this world (Mark 4:19; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:2; Col. 3:1-3).[266] The following words of Jesus must alway echo in our ears: *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you* (John 15:18-19). Just as Israel would like to assimilate among the Gentile nations and God says it will never come to pass, so too believers will find it impossible to remain friends with both the world and God (Jas. 4:4). Sometimes God uses persecution to remind us of Who we belong to and bring us back to our spiritual senses. Although persecution is never pleasant, we need to recognize the purposes it serves in God's hands. "Nothing is plainer than that the Holy Ghost never acknowledges the Christian in any way except as separate from the world,—the object of its animosity and persecution, cast out, despised, unknown, by the world. Such is our place as recognized by the word of God. It is for Christians to account for the fact that they have lost it; for clearly what I have been describing does not, somehow or another, apply at the present time. Is it that the world is getting better, or that they themselves have become worse?"[267] "Why [is persecution] permitted? Among the reasons why it has been permitted may be the following: (a) To show the power and reality of religion. It seemed desirable to subject it to 'all kinds' of trial, in order to show that its existence could not be accounted for except on the supposition that it is from God. If men had never been called on to 'suffer' on account of religion, it would have been easy for the enemies of religion to allege that there was little evidence that it was genuine, or was of value, for it had never been tried. Compare Job 1:9-11. As it is, it has been subjected to 'every form' of trial which wicked men could devise, and has shown itself to be adapted to meet them all. The work of the martyrs has been well done; and religion in the times of martyrdom has shown itself to be all that it is desirable it should be. (b) In order to promote its spread in the world. 'The blood of the martyrs' has been 'the seed of the church;' and it is probable that religion in past times has owed much of its purity, and of its diffusion, to the fact that it has been persecuted. (c) To fit the sufferers for an exalted place in heaven. They who have suffered persecution needed trials as well as others, for 'all' Christians need them - and 'theirs' came in this form. Some of the most lovely traits of

Christian character have been brought out in connection with persecution, and some of the most triumphant exhibitions of preparation for heaven have been made at the stake."[268] "This purpose is not merely to set forth God's power in being able to protect His own but specifically the fact that 'the world power cannot imperil the safety of God's saints.' Throughout the ages the world power has manifested its character of deep hostility against God's people. In certain periods of the world's history this character of the world power had to become quiescent. It may burst into activity at any moment. God's people should be kept aware of this."[269] "There sounds the admonition to every right-meaning young man, however prosperous he may be, to prepare for fiery times. The world is under an erring rule . . . Envious and malicious eyes are watching you, and eager to show their superior devotion by accusing you and bringing you into trouble. The way of faithfulness often lies through the fiery furnace, heated seven-fold to consume you. Therefore prepare for fiery times, and think it not strange when they come."[270]

- **Church and State** - As Christians, we are subject to God and to civil authority. We must be intimately familiar with God's Word in order to rightly discern how to walk in a way that honors and pleases God: able to identify situations when God's law (higher law) is being violated by the civil authority and its (lower) law. We also need to carefully understand whether such a violation by the state seeks to force us, personally, to follow suit. In cases where God's law is broken by the state *and* if, to remain subject to the state, we personally would have to break God's law, then we *must* participate in civil obedience. Where we carefully and prayerfully determine this to be so, we must be willing to yield our lives, if required, trusting God's sovereign will for the results. We must understand there is a clear distinction between the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's alone (Mat. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). "When Caesar arrogates to himself the things that are the Lord's, then, and in such cases, his authority is to be resisted. God does not desire Caesar's things; Caesar must not have the things of God."[271] "The Judeans' accommodation in chapters 1 and 2 [of Daniel] shows that believers can and should respect and obey human authorities in the civil realm (Mat. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7) as long as such obedience does not involve a compromise or denial of faith in the one true God. However, Daniel 3▸ (like Daniel 6▸) will show that believers are obligated to disobey human authorities when they require idolatry or other forms of compromise or denial of the one true faith. Taken together, chapters 1-3 therefore show the distinction between the civil realm and the religious realm, the distinction between church and state. As much as possible, believers live as law-abiding citizens of their state, but as members of the kingdom of God, their highest allegiance is to God. When required by human authorities to compromise their faith, they must 'obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29)."[272] "The business of the Christian is to show respect to all who are in authority, to pay honor to whom honor is due, owing no man anything save love. What makes this so particularly strong, is, that the emperor then reigning was one of the worst and most cruel men that ever filled the throne of the Caesars. And yet there is no reserve or qualification, nay the very reverse of an insinuation that, if the emperor ordered what was good, the Christians were to obey, but, that if not, they were free from their allegiance. The Christian is called to obey—not always Nero or Nebuchadnezzar, but *God* evermore. The consequence is, that this at once delivers from the very smallest real ground for charging a godly person with being a rebel."[273] See *Civil Disobedience and the Christian*.
- **Against Situational Ethics** - The Christian is to live according to principle, not pragmatism. It is not our responsibility to evaluate moral trade-offs to choose the lesser of several evils in an attempt to control the results of a difficult situation. Imagine how this chapter might have turned out if the three Jewish men applied situational ethics? "If these three young Hebrews were living today and were facing the same test, if they sought the advice of the religious leaders of our day, they would be advised to 'go along' with the king, bow to the image, 'coexist' with the idolaters, and, by so doing, perhaps lead the king into a better life."[274] Situational ethics opens the door to temptation, compromise, and our powerful ability to rationalize. "Wouldn't it better [for the Jews] to just quickly bow down . . . and be able to continue being an influence for God in this pagan kingdom? Why throw away their God-given positions when a second or two of necessary compromise would allow them to continue serving God in the kingdom?"[275] We are *never* called to adopt an ungodly method (e.g., deception, lying) to live in a way which pleases God. Whenever we might feel a temptation to resort to such an approach, we should immediately recognize our greater sin of lack of trust in the sovereign control of God over the affairs of our life. Our job is to walk according to His principles and then, having done so, leave the results in His hands. "If I do a thing, ever so right in itself, on

the mere ground that I have a right to disobey man under certain circumstances, I am doing the lesser of two evils. The principle for a Christian man is never to do evil at all. He may fail, as I do not deny; but I do not understand a man quietly settling down that he must accept any evil whatever. It is a heathenish idea. An idolater that had not the revealed light of God could know no better. Yet you will find Christian persons using the present confession of the condition of the Church as an excuse for persevering in known evil, and saying, Of two evils we must choose the lesser! But I maintain that, whatever the difficulty may be, there is always the path of God for the godly to walk in. Why then do I find practical difficulty? Because I wish to spare myself. If I compound for even a little evil, the broad way of ease and honor lies open, but I sacrifice God and come under the power of Satan."[276] "This is 'the religion of principle;' and when we consider the circumstances of those who made this reply; when we remember their comparative youth, and the few opportunities which they had for instruction in the nature of religion, and that they were captives in a distant land, and that they stood before the most absolute monarch of the earth, with no powerful friends to support them, and with the most horrid kind of death threatening them, we may well admire the grace of that God who could so amply furnish them for such a trial, and love that religion which enabled them to take a stand so noble and so bold. . . . [The religion of principle] is founded mainly on two things - an intelligent view of duty, and fixed principle. (a) An intelligent view of duty; an acquaintance with what is right, and what is wrong. These young men had made up their minds intelligently, that it was right to worship God, and that it was wrong to render homage to an idol. . . . The religion of principle is always found where there is an intelligent view of what is right, and a man can give a 'reason' for what he does. (b) This religion is founded on a determination to 'do' what is right, and 'not' to do what is wrong. The question is not what is expedient, or popular, or honorable, or lucrative, or pleasant, but what is right. . . . It is the only kind [of religion] in which there is any fixed and certain standard. If a man regulates his opinions and conduct from expediency, or from respect to the opinions of others, or from feeling, or from popular impulses, there is no standard; there is nothing settled or definite. Now one thing is popular, now another; today the feelings may prompt to one thing, tomorrow to another; at one time expediency will suggest one course, at another a different course."[277]

- **Exclusivity of the Christian Worldview** - Pagan beliefs are generally quick to accommodate other views. In our day, this idea can be seen in the popular bumper featuring the words *COEXIST* or *TOLERANCE*, the letters rendered using symbols of various religions. The prevalent idea behind this ancient view is, "I'm OK. You're OK. Let's all just get along." While this philosophy sounds friendly enough, it denies the reality of objective truth—the idea there is One God Who Alone is True and Who has defined acceptable ethical behavior. As those whom God has separated to Himself, our very existence is a testimony against this religious pluralism and moral relativism. Thus, we are "thorns in the side" of paganism and humanism. If we remain true to God, we will become the subjects of controversy and persecution because we testify against the pluralistic world view. "According to the prevailing views, no mode of religion could be tolerated which would maintain that 'all' the gods that were worshipped were false. Religion was supposed to be identified with the best interests of the state, and was recognized by the laws, and protected by the laws. To deny the claim, therefore, of any and of all the gods that were worshipped; to maintain that all were false alike; to call on men to forsake their idols, and to embrace a new religion - all this was regarded as an attack on the state. This was the attitude which Christianity assumed toward the religions of the Roman empire, and it was this which led to the fiery persecutions which prevailed there. While Rome could consistently tolerate any form of idolatry that would recognize the religion established by the state, it could not tolerate a system which maintained that 'all' idolatry was wrong."[278] See commentary on *Daniel 3:5*.
- **Fallen Man's Response to Revelation** - One of the surprising aspects of this chapter is the very first verse. Nebuchadnezzar had seen the power of God at work through Daniel in chapter 2, but now he acts in a way completely at odds with the revelation God graciously provided in his dream. "Why should we be surprised that Nebuchadnezzar failed to understand the revelation from God in chapter 2? Apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the natural man will never grasp what God is saying or doing. Nebuchadnezzar is an example of what Paul taught . . . *For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely*

given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). Apart from the ministry of the Spirit, we will distort and pervert the Scriptures as badly as the pagan Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar."[279] We must understand that those who are not yet born again will distort and mishandle the things of God until they receive God's Spirit and are reborn (John 3:7).

- **The Preservation of Israel** - All attempts to destroy the Jews and their nation will ultimately fail. "The prophetic lesson set forth concerns Israel among the Gentiles until 'the times of the Gentiles' comes to an end. The three young Hebrews are a picture of the nation Israel, moving in the furnace of Gentile power but never consumed. From the human standpoint and by human standards, Israel should have been wiped out as a nation; but God has miraculously preserved that nation in the fiery furnace of race hatred and persecution. . . . even in the furnaces of Adolph Hitler where literally millions of them were cremated. In spite of persecutions down through the centuries, the Jew marches on. Israel is God's covenant nation, and will finally be miraculously delivered and exalted among the nations. This is the deeper prophetic teaching of the fiery furnace episode. . . . In spite of Pharaoh's attempt to drown Israel . . . in spite of Haman's gallows, Caesar's guillotine, Mussolini's hatred, Stalin's wholesale butchering and Hitler's ovens, *Israel lives on, moves on,* and will . . . fulfill God's ultimate aim for them."[280] See *Preservation of Israel*.
- **Learning to Stand on Our Own** - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were unable to look to Daniel to help them navigate the difficulties they faced in this chapter. While there may be a season in our Christian walk where we benefit from the guidance and example of a mature brother or sister in the Lord, we should expect, sooner or later, that we'll need to be able stand on our own two feet. "You'll have a believer you respect, a believer that's mature, a Christian leader that you look up to and people will tend to cluster around that person. And when God thinks that these believers have enough of the Word of God He will remove that person from them and then try a test on them to see whether they're leaning on the Word of God or whether in fact they are leaning upon the other person. You see, Christian friends who are mature, who are your leaders, people you respect very much can themselves be very dangerous idols for you. So therefore God will put you in a situation where you won't have the opportunity to have another more mature believer around to consult, cry on their shoulder or do something else."[281]
- **Our Reason for Living** - The Christian world view leads us to conclude that the greatest goal of living is to glorify God. The primary way we glorify God is by dedicating our lives to His service. In other words, we yield our lives for His purposes, whatever they might be. If we allow our love for this world to eclipse our service of God, then we effectively remove ourselves from the altar and no longer behave as willing sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). If done to preserve our life, then we are negating the ultimate purpose in living (Luke 17:33). "For of what use is life except to serve God's glory? But we lose that object in life for the sake of the life itself — that is, by desiring to live entirely to the world, we lose the very purpose of living!"[282] "Someone has said that life is not worth living, if we are not willing to die for something. If we have not discovered anything in life worth dying for, then there is nothing of any real substance to our life. Are you willing to die for your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you give a clear testimony to others that your allegiance belongs to him alone?"[283] See commentary on *Daniel 3:28*.
- **God is Sovereign** - In our view, this is the foundational principle among all those listed here. Unless we come to a place in our Christian maturity where we grasp this important truth, *our trust in God will remain conditional*. Unless we believe God is in control of all the affairs of life, from the largest galaxy to the smallest subatomic particle, then we will be unable to walk according to His principles or rest in His peace when a storm rages around us (Isa. 26:3; Php. 4:6-7; Col. 3:14-15; Rom. 5:1; 8:6). "It has been often found by experience; the martyrs have often showed plainly that the peace and calm of their minds were undisturbed in the midst of the greatest bodily torment, and have sometimes rejoiced and sung praises upon the rack and in the fire. If Christ is pleased to send forth his Spirit to manifest his love, and speaks friendly to the soul, it will support it even in the greatest outward torment that man can inflict."[284] "Here is a pertinent lesson for believers today. Does God have all power? Yes. Is God able to deliver believers from all problems and trials? Yes. But does God deliver believers from all trials? No. God may allow trials to come

into the lives of his people to build character or for a number of other reasons (Rom. 5). The purpose for trials may not always be understood, but God simply asks that his children trust him—even when it is not easy."[285] "We must never forget that God's will is very individualistic. What the Lord does for one of His children does not dictate what He will do for another. The difference in His dealings does not reflect a greater love for one child, nor does it necessarily mean a greater godliness in a child of God. For example, God chose to let godly James die but delivered godly Peter (cf. Acts 12:1-11). Why didn't God send the angel who released Peter from prison to do the same for James? Or why was it the Lord's will to allow John to live a long life while Peter's life would be "prematurely terminated (John 21:21-22)? The Lord is the Good Shepherd of His sheep and he leads according to His absolute wisdom, sovereignty and goodness."[286]

For a list of New Testament passages containing references, allusions, and themes found in this chapter, see *Daniel 3 in the New Testament*.

Notes

[1] *The form of the image is not explicitly stated. If the image resembled a man, then it might have stood atop a pedestal as depicted here*. This image is a modified, color-enhanced version of the original work of Clarence Larkin, now in the public domain. Enhanced image is hereby placed in the public domain.

[2] Robert Dean, *Lessons on Daniel* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso [transcriber]. 2006), 15.171.

[3] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 1949, 1969), 132.

[4] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Class Notes on Daniel, Dallas Theological Seminary* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso [transcriber]. 2006), 5.30.

[5] Oliver B. Greene, *Daniel* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour. 1964, 1974), 12.

[6] Clarke places the events of chapter 3 *after* those of chapter 4: "It is supposed that the history given here did not occur till the close, or near the end, of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. For it was after his insanity, as we see Dan. 4:33-36, and this happened near the close of his reign."—Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible - Daniel* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software. 1832), Dan. 3:1.

[7] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament* (New York, NY: Lewis Colby. 1847), Dan. 3:1.

[8] J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. 2020), 263.

[9] "Zedekiah made a trip to Babylon (Jer. 51:59-64). Zedekiah's trip most likely took place upon the return of Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, perhaps in late Kislev 594 (late December 594) or more likely in Tebeth 593 (January 593). Zedekiah probably was asked to make this trip to profess his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. See [Andrew E Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House. 2011), 349]."—Andrew E Steinmann, *Daniel* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House. 2008), 167-168.

[10] Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology*, 160-161.

[11] Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications. 1983), Jer. 51:59.

[12] John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1985), Dan. 3:1.

[13] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[14] "Dyer, p. 706, believed the likely background for these events was a coup attempt against Nebuchadnezzar that occurred in December 595 and January 594 B.C., which the Babylonian Chronicles record."—Thomas Constable, *Notes on Daniel* (Garland, TX: Sonic Light. 2009), 37.

[15] "It is not impossible that Nebuchadnezzar was led . . . to the construction of this image by what he had seen in Egypt. He had conquered and ravaged Egypt but a few years before this, and had doubtless been struck with the wonders of art which he had seen there. Colossal statues in honor of the gods abounded, and nothing would be more natural than that Nebuchadnezzar should wish to make his capital rival everything which he had seen in Thebes."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1.

[16] "Archaeological excavations have gone far towards explaining why Nebuchadrezzar erected an image in the plain of Dura and compelled the people to worship before it. Apparently this procedure was part of a thorough-going reformation of religious calendars and cultic rites that Nebuchadrezzar instituted. Excavations at the ziggurat of Ur have shown that these

reforms were aimed at making the rituals less priestly and esoteric by bringing them within physical range of public participation by the assembled worshippers. In particular the king, rather than the priests, was the representative of the god in congregational worship, and everybody was able to participate publicly in the ceremonies, regardless of rank or status."—Roland K. Harrison, "Daniel, Book of," in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1979, 1915), 1:864. This view does not adequately explain why only governmental *leaders*, rather than the common people, were invited to the dedication of the image (Dan. 3:2‣)?

[17] "Heathen as he was, how could he better memorialize this Jehovah-power than in Jehovah's own picture of it, of which picture he himself and his empire were divinely said to be the golden head? He meant it honestly, to acknowledge and glorify that very God of heaven who had remarkably communicated with him. . . . The fault was not in the exaction, but in the heathen error of undertaking to materialize divine things."—Joseph Augustus Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet* (Philadelphia, PA: Porter & Coates. 1879), 103-104, 106.

[18] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:4-7.

[19] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Daniel," in D. A. Carson, ed., *New Bible Commentary (4th ed.)* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. 1994, 1970), 751.

[20] "For as the blessed Daniel, in interpreting the vision, had answered the king, saying, 'Thou art this head of gold in the image,' the king, being puffed up with this address, and elated in heart, made a copy of this image, in order that he might be worshipped by all as God."—Hippolytus, "On Daniel," in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume V: Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company. 1886), 188. "The king reasoned that since the golden head in the dream symbolized Babylonia, if the entire statue were made of gold rather than other metals and clay, his kingdom could never be toppled, and Babylonia would remain triumphant forever (*Rabbeinu Tam; Arbarbanel*)."—Nosson Scherman, ed., *Tanach* (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd. 2001), Dan. 3:1. "Daniel had declared that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in the image of his dream. Instead of humbling himself before God, the dream caused Nebuchadnezzar to be filled with excessive pride, and he made an entire image of gold to represent the kingdom he had built."—J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. 1997, c1981), Dan. 3:2. "The statue, which the king arrogantly made, represented himself as an expression of his greatness and glory and reflected the dream where he was the head of gold (Dan. 2:38‣)."—John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. 1997), Dan. 3:1.

[21] Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. 1982), Dan. 3:1-7.

[22] Nebuchadnezzar's desire to erect a permanent government has been the goal of any number of godless regimes since, even down to our own day where the dream finds modern day expression in secular humanism.

[23] John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Broken Arrow, OK: StudyLamp Software. 1746-1763), Dan. 3:1.

[24] Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[25] Stephen R. Miller, "Daniel," in E. Ray Clendenen, Kenneth A. Mathews, and David S. Dockery, eds., *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman. 1994), Dan. 3:1.

[26] "The statue was likely a representation of Marduk, the principal god of Babylon."—Ibid., Dan. 3:5. "[The] OG τῷ εἰδώλῳ σου [*tō eidōlō sou*] (Dan. 3:12‣) takes as singular, and specifically takes the statue as a god/idol."—John E. Goldingay, "Daniel," vol. 30 in Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word Books), 66.

[27] "Some think the figure was a likeness of his father, Nabopolassar ; others,that it was a likeness of himself; others, that it was an image intended to represent Bel, the great Babylonian deity; others, that it was a new deity of his own ; whilst Professor Stuart considers it an obelisk, or plain shaft, with an orb at the summit representing the sun."—Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 99.

[28] Pentecost, *Class Notes on Daniel, Dallas Theological Seminary*, 5.27.

[29] Gleason Leonard Archer, "Daniel," vol. 7 in Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 1985), Dan. 3:1.

[30] For an extensive discussion of ancient metals and their usage in statuary, see "Book 34: *The Natural History of Metals*"—J. Pliny the Elder and Bostock, ed., *The Natural History (English)* (Medford, MA: Taylor and Fancis. 1855), s.v. "Book 34: .".

[31] Monty S. Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries. 1988, 1999), Dan. 3:1.

[32] A. D. Herodotus and Godley, ed., *The Histories (English)* (Medford, MA: Harvard University Press. 1920), 1.183.1-3.

[33] "Nebuchadnezzar had the statue made of gold (i.e., covered with gold leaf). Actually, there was not enough gold in all Babylonia to make a statue so large of solid gold."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[34] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[35] Ibid., 163.

[36] "What form did the 'abomination' set up by Antiochus take? A reading of 1 Maccabees (1:54, 59) and of Josephus (Ant 12 §252) suggests that a pagan altar was erected on top of the altar of burnt offering in the temple. There is no explicit mention of an idol being erected, nor of one being destroyed when the temple was cleansed (1 Macc 4:43). However, the later Christian and Jewish tradition that a statue of Zeus was erected in the rededicated temple (perhaps also statues of Antiochus himself) may have some historical foundation."—D. Wenham, "Abomination of Desolation," in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday. c1992, 1996), 1:29. "It is thoroughly inconsequent and ridiculous to discover . . . an imaginary prototype of the [Abomination of Desolation] of Antiochus Epiphanes, which was assigned by pseudo-Daniel to the era of the captivity; for according to 1 Macc. 1:54, 59, this . . . was not a statue at all, but an altar of small size, erected on the altar of burnt offerings at Jerusalem (cf. Hengstenberg, p. 86)."—Otto Zöckler, "The Book of the Prophet Daniel," in John Peter Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1880), 92.

[37] "Throughout the ancient Near East, kings and other important officials often adopted longer cubits. (This practice may have started to emphasize the majesty of the king, who by implication was taller, more handsome, and mightier than commoners. Compare Saul as an example in 1S. 9:2.) One of these official cubits may have been the long cubit referred to in Eze. 40:5 (אַמָּה וָטֹפַח [*ʾammâ wāṭōpaḥ*], 'an [ordinary] cubit and a handbreadth'). Similar measures were sometimes used in Egypt and Babylon. The long cubit probably was about 52 centimeters or 20.3 inches. If the measure here is the long cubit, the statue would have been about 31.2 meters or 101.5 feet tall and about 3.1 meters or 10 feet wide."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1. "The length of the 'cubit' was not the same in every place. The length originally was the distance between the elbow and the extremity of the middle finger, about eighteen inches. The Hebrew cubit, according to Bishop Cumberland and M. Pelletier, was twenty-one inches; but others fix it at eighteen. - Calmet. The Talmudists say that the Hebrew cubit was larger by one quarter than the Roman. Herodotus says that the cubit in Babylon was three fingers longer than the usual one. - Clio, 178. Still, there is not absolute certainty on that subject."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1.

[38] e.g., NIV84, NET, HCSB, NLT

[39] "It should be noted that the figures 'sixty' and 'six' suggest that the sexagesimal system was in use, rather than the decimal; these numbers, then, provide a mark of authenticity, because Babylon employed the sexagesimal system."—Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 1998), Dan. 3:1.

[40] Anthony C. Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ : A Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Volume 1, Rev. 1-14)* (Camano Island, WA: SpiritAndTruth.org. 2004), 2.7.5.3.5.

[41] Ibid., 2.7.5.3.6.

[42] H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 2nd ed (New York, NY: Loizeaux Brothers. 1953), 47.

[43] "We may not, however, with Klief., seek any sanction for the idea that the significance off the image is in its size, 6, 10, and six multiplied by ten cubits, because the symbolical significance of the number 6 as the *signature* of human activity, to which the divine completion (7) is wanting, is not a Babylonian idea."—Carl Friedrich Keil, "Daniel," in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson. 2002), 9:570.

[44] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Glenside, PA: Clarence Larkin Estate. 1929), Dan. 3:1.

[45] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[46] John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute. 1971), Dan. 3:1.

[47] "Some have thought that the height includes the pedestal on which it stood; and, allowing twelve cubits for that, the height of the image was forty six cubits."—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 3:1. "But the term of the original, *ṣalm*, can be used of a stele only partly sculptured, *e.g.*, the use of the word in the Nerab Inscription, where the stone is decorated at the top with the relief of the bust of a human body."—James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark. 1927, 1959), 196.

[48] "Undoubtedly Nebuchadnezzar had erected the image on a pedestal high enough for the multitudes to see it even from a distance."—Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1. "The best explanation is that the 'nine feet' does speak of the width of the statue, but the 'ninety feet' includes the height of a base upon which the image rested."—Miller, *Daniel*, 110.

[49] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[50] "The word which is here rendered 'breadth' [פְּתָיֵהּ [*pᵉṯâēh*]] occurs nowhere else in the Chaldean of the Scriptures, except in Ezra 6:3 : 'Let the house be builded, the height thereof threescore cubits, and the 'breadth' thereof threescore cubits.' Perhaps this refers rather to the 'depth' of the temple from front to rear, as Taylor has remarked, than to the breadth from one side to another."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1. "The 'height,' sixty cubits, is so out of proportion with the 'breadth,' exceeding it ten times, that it seems best to suppose the *thickness* from breast to back to be intended, which is exactly the right proportion of a well-formed man [AUGUSTINE, The City of God, 15.20]."—A. R. Fausset, "The Book of Daniel," in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1997, 1877), s.v. "Width is Depth?."

[51] Miller, *Daniel*, 109.

[52] Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan 3:1.

[53] Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, 225.

[54] Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[55] Leupold gives the location as approximately six miles from Babylon: " 'Dura' is a rather common name in Mesopotamia, being a name that is applicable to any place which is enclosed by a wall. It seems quite likely that a spot by this name about six miles south of Babylon may be the one referred to, for a massive square of brick construction is still to be seen there which is fourteen meters square and six meters high. This may have served as a base for the image or have been the pedestal or a part of it."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1. Miller gives the distance as four miles: "Evidence for such a base may have been discovered by the French archaeologist Oppert, who located the remains of a brick structure (ca. forty-five ft. square and twenty ft. high) twelve miles southeast of Hillah (about four miles south of ancient Babylon), which he believed formed the pedestal of this colossal image."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[56] Keil, *Daniel*, 9:567.

[57] "This site away from the city, but yet within easy walking distance of it, suits our conclusion that the glory of this monument of gold was intended to have maximum impact, for if erected in Babylon itself, tall as it was, it would have been dwarfed by the ziggurat which towered 280 feet into the air and the many other lofty buildings, including the defensive walls of the city which themselves included many towers 60 feet high."—Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[58] "No doubt he did not want the other buildings of Babylon to detract from the magnificence of the image which was to commemorate his glory. Also, in the wide open spaces he would have room for all the great men of the many provinces of Babylon whom he proposed to invite."—Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[59] "Since it was near Babylon it could have been by the (fortified) city-wall (*dūru*) parts of which were specifically named (e.g., *Dūru ša Karābi*)."—Donald J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 1985, 2004), 110-111. "A statue that was some ninety feet high but only about nine feet wide may have needed the support of the city wall to keep from falling. Since the city wall of Babylon is thought to have been about two hundred ninety-five feet high and seventy-nine feet thick, it could easily have helped support such a statue."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[60] "The Jews have a notion that this was the valley in the land of Shinar where the tower of Babel was built . . . [*Kabala Denudata*, par. 1. p. 671]"—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 3:1.

[61] Paul Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come* (Clifton, TX: Scofield Ministries. 2007), Dan. 3:1.

[62] *Woodcut showing the three men in the fiery furnace, made for the w:de:Lübecker Bibel (1494)*. Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org. Image is in the public domain.

[63] In the book of Ruth, a kinsman redeemer (Boaz) marries a Gentile bride (Ruth) and helps a displaced Jewess (Naomi) regain her land. Numerous interpreters see Boaz representing Jesus Christ, Ruth representing the Church, and Naomi representing Israel. Jesus is the Kinsman Redeemer Who marries a (mostly) Gentile bride and restores Israel to her land.

[64] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[65] J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications. 1983), Dan. 3:28-30.

[66] Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 53-54.

[67] Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I: The Apostolic Fathers With Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company. 1885), 558.

[68] Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, 76.

[69] William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)* (Richardson, TX: Galaxie Software. 1881, 2004), 74.

[70] Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, 232.

[71] Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 1996), Dan. 3:17.

[72] Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[73] Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:30.

[74] Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible*, Dan. 3:1.

[75] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 73.

[76] Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 2nd (New York, NY: Our Hope. 1911), 44.

[77] Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:7.

[78] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:4-7.

[79] Ibid., Dan. 3:13-15.

[80] Charles Lee Feinberg, *A Commentary on Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books. 1981), Dan. 3:4-5.

[81] Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 42.

[82] McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary*, Dan. 3:25.

[83] "Some have proposed that Daniel's absence is symbolic of the church while the three Hebrews are symbolic of Israel. The church, like Daniel, will be inexplicably gone from the scene while Israel, like the three Hebrews, will be tried by fire. There certainly is nothing in the text that would required this explanation, nor are there any direct statements or actions on the part of any of the characters that would call for this conclusion."—Thomas A Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist's Den* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. 2008), 137.

[84] Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:2.

[85] "There are eight positions of leadership listed in verses two and three. Even after considerable investigation and analysis scholars still cannot be exactly sure which officials are in view here. However, we can be sure that every part of the empire, with its diversity of peoples, religions and cultures, was represented adequately at this dedication ceremony."—Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, Dan. 3:2.

[86] "With the differences of administration and office that prevail between those times and ours, we scarcely have exact equivalents even if we should happen to know exactly what offices these officials held. The following listing will show a part of our problem. 1. *ʿachashdarpenayyaʿ* = 'satraps' (Persian: protectors of the realm). 2. *Śighnayyaʿ* = 'prefects' (Aramaic). 3. *pach^{a}wathaʿ* = 'governors' (Babylonian or Persian). 4. *^{a}dhargaz^{e}rayyaʿ* = 'counselors' (Persian). 5. *g^{e}dhobhrayyaʿ* = 'treasurers' (dubious). 6. *d^{e}thobhrayyaʿ* = 'law-bearers' (Persian). 7. *tiphtayeʿ* = 'magistrates' (dubious). Three, perhaps four, are terms that are derived from the Persian. One seems to be Aramaic. One could be Babylonian. Two are dubious although *K. W.* derives the last one from the Old Persian. Many of the meanings finally arrived at are partly conjectural."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:2.

[87] "Daniel may have updated some of these Babylonian titles with modern Persian equivalents when he wrote the book in its final form."—Constable, *Notes on Daniel*, 39. "The preponderance of *Persian* names about fifty years before the Persians became dominant might at first glance prove disconcerting in what is supposed to be a list of officials who were gathered by the *Babylonian* monarch. . . . Daniel will surely have taken pains as nearly as possible to bring his book up to date and to have kept it so in case certain portions had been written earlier in his long life."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:2.

[88] Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:3.

[89] If Babylon was like most governments, the highest level leaders were not involved significantly in the day-to-day operations of the realm.

[90] Scripture does not specify the number of captives Nebuchadnezzar took, along with Daniel and his companions, in the first deportation.

[91] "The common people of the Jews also escaped, as the command extended particularly to the rulers."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1.

[92] *Old Babylonian relief of a musician*, Istanbul Ancient Orient Museum. Copyright © 2012 www.BiblePlaces.com. This image appears by special permission and may not be duplicated for use in derivative works.

[93] Charles H. Dyer, "The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 147 no. 588 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary. January-March 1968), 429-430.

[94] e.g., [Dyer, *The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3*].

[95] "It would not be practicable to determine with precision what kind of instruments of music are denoted by the words used in this verse. They were, doubtless, in many respects different from those which are in use now, though they may have belonged to the same general class, and may have been constructed on substantially the same principles."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:5. "קיתרוס [*qyṯrws*] corresponds to κίθαρις [*kitharis*]; it is unclear whether it is originally a Gk. or Sem. word, and whether it refers to an instrument more like a lyre or more like a zither."—Goldingay, *Daniel*, 65.

[96] Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:7.

[97] The frequently-heard idea that God want's to "bypass our mind to get to our heart" is out-of-step with the nature of true biblical worship which fully engages the mind, having been renewed by God's Word.

[98] Charles Clough, *Lessons on Daniel* (Spokane, WA: Ellen Kelso, [transcriber]. 2006), 11.144.

[99] Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.178.

[100] *Robert Johann Koldewey (1855-1925), archaeologist*. Koldewey excavated Babylon from 1899-1918 recovering many relics from the Neo-Babylonian era. Image courtesy of Herner Netz This image is in the public domain.

[101] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:5.

[102] Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:5.

[103] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:5.

[104] Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:1-3.

[105] "A second identification of סוּמְפֹנְיָה [*sûm^{e}ppōn^{e}yâ*] also interprets it as a Greek loan word συμφωνία [*symphōnia*] but with a different understanding of that Greek word. In this identification the word has the idea of 'harmony' or 'concord' and describes not an individual instrument but the music from all the instruments. Such an interpretation has some lexical support. In the sixth century B.C. Pindar wrote, 'Honor the people and prompt them to harmony [συμφωνον [*symphōnon*]] and peace' (Pythian Ode I. 70). The Septuagint translation of Daniel 3‣ uses συμφωνία [*symphōnia*] in the sense of 'sounding together.' The only occurrence of συμφωνία [*symphōnia*] in the New Testament uses this same meaning. In Luke 15:25 a man's son returns to his house to hear 'music [συμφωνία [*symphōnia*]] and dancing.' "—Dyer, *The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3*, 433-434. "סומפניה [*swmpnyh*] corresponds to συνψωνία [*synpsōnia*]. It can denote ensemble playing, here indicating the instruments playing together after each plays individually, in accordance with common practice. Later it can refer to a particular instrument, perhaps double-flute, drums, or bagpipes. When Antiochus Epiphanes revels to the συνψωνία [*synpsōnia*] (Polybius 26.1.4), it could have either meaning. Its omission in v 7 (whether original or not) is more natural if it is taken to refer to playing together; it would be less dispensable if it referred to a specific instrument."—Goldingay, *Daniel*, 65.

[106] "Some English versions translate it here as 'bagpipe' (e.g., ESV, NASB), but bagpipes were unknown in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. Another argument against 'bagpipe' is that wind instruments were enumerated first ('the horn, the flute') and were followed by stringed instruments ('lyre, the harp, triangular harp'), so a wind instrument would be unexpected here at the end of the list. Some have suggested that this instrument is a drum and that it originally derived its name from the Semitic *tp*, which became the Greek τύμπανον [*tympanon*] (hence 'tympani') and then this Aramaic word, סוּמְפֹנְיָה [*sûm^{e}ppōn^{e}yâ*]. The change in sounds and spellings from Greek to Aramaic can be explained as follows: (1). The exchange of 't' for 's' before either 'l' or 'y' is a feature of East Greek dialects, and the syllables 'si' and 'ti' sometimes interchange in Mycenaean Greek. (2). The Greek τύμπανον [*tympanon*] sometimes appears as τύπανον [*typanon*], which would explain the readings סוּפַּנְיָה [*sûppōnn^{e}yâ*] and סִיפַּנְיָה [*sîpōn^{e}yâ*] (both without מ) in Dan. 3:10‣. (3). The changed vowel in the second syllable (Greek 'a' versus Aramaic 'o') is paralleled by the Ionic γλᾶσσα [*glassa*] for γλῶσσα [*glōssa*]. A drum makes the most sense in this context. The order of instruments in the list would then be wind instruments first, then string instruments, and finally percussion."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:5.

[107] Ibid., Dan. 3:1.

[108] "In some ancient cultures the king was considered divine, but this was not the case in the Babylonian Empire."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:3.

[109] "The fact that he distinguished between serving his gods and worshiping the image, though they are interrelated, seems to confirm the idea that the worship is primarily political, although the fact that they do not worship his gods is a condemning circumstance."—Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Dan. 3:13.

[110] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:10.

[111] "In days of old practically all nations were still at least so religious as to believe that success in arms was attributable to the power of the gods. If a nation had prevailed over another nation, the thing that had happened behind the scenes was that the victorious nation's god or gods had prevailed over those of the vanquished. This being a universal conviction, there could hardly be any hesitancy to confess such a conviction. Such a confession was practically what Nebuchadnezzar asked."—Ibid., Dan. 3:2. Conversely, the subsequent overthrow of Babylon is an indication of the powerlessness of her idols. "Declare among the nations, Proclaim, and set up a standard; Proclaim—do not conceal it— Say, 'Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed. Merodach is broken in pieces; Her idols are humiliated, Her images are broken in pieces' " (Jer. 50:2).

[112] John Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software. 1998, 1561), Dan. 3:8-12.

[113] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 61.

[114] "Nebuchadnezzar was seeking a unifying principle to weld together the tribes and tongues and peoples of his kingdom into one great totalitarian government. In other words, he was attempting to institute a world religion. This was nothing in the world but a repetition of the tower of Babel—a forming of one religion for the world."—McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary*, Dan. 3:2. "When we study history we discover that the great egomaniacs who have wanted to conquer the world have been men who have tried to use religion for their own purposes. In the late 1930s, it was written: *One cannot be a good German and at the same time deny God. But an avowal of faith in the eternal Germany is an avowal of faith in the eternal God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler the Führer serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God*."—David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing. 1992), 74.

[115] "It should be observed, however, that the command at that time would not be regarded as harsh and oppressive by 'pagan' worshippers, and might be complied with consistently with their views, without infringing on their notions of religious liberty. The homage rendered to one god did not, according to their views, conflict with any honor that was due to another, and though they were required to worship this divinity, that would not be a prohibition against worshipping any other."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:6.

[116] Ibid., Dan. 3:30.

[117] Keil, *Daniel*, 9:570.

[118] "No other nation but the Jews would feel this edict oppressive; for it did not prevent them worshipping their own gods *besides*."—Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, s.v. "Monotheism Only Problem for Jews."

[119] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1.

[120] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:2.

[121] "Nebuchadnezzar was sure that if he could coerce the Jewish people to engage in idolatry, the climax of the prophecy of the Four Kingdoms, Israel's dominance, would not be fulfilled (*[Rabbi] Saadiah Gaon*)."—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 3:1.

[122] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers. 2002), 1621.

[123] James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems. 1997), #10734.

[124] *Old Welsh lime kiln (53°08'50.3"N 4°19'39.9"W).* "*The burning fieryfurnace* of Dan. 3:6, etc., must have been similar to our common lime-kiln, with a perpendicular shaft from the top and an opening at the bottom for extracting the fused lime . . ."—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 202. Image courtesy of Eric Jones, 2007. Use of this image is subject to a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 license.

[125] "As Jarchi observes: the music was to draw, the furnace was to drive, men to this idolatrous worship; the one was to please and sooth the minds of men, and so allure them to such stupid service; the other to frighten them into obedience."—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 3:6.

[126] Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist's Den*, 127-128.

[127] "The presence on site of a huge furnace indicates that large-scale smelting was involved in the construction of this monument, for surely such a furnace would not have been built to cover the remote contingency that someone would disobey the royal edict as any threat of execution would be an equally adequate deterrent."—Mills, *Daniel: A Study Guide to the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:1.

[128] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10471.

[129] Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:19-23.

[130] Dean, *Lessons on Daniel*, 15.179.

[131] "The furnace may have been built on the side of a small hill or man-made mound of earth, enabling the soldiers to walk to the top and throw the three Hebrews into it."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:23.

[132] Ibid., Dan. 3:6.

[133] Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 1949, 1998), Dan. 3:6.

[134] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:6.

[135] Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1622.

[136] Fausset, *The Book of Daniel*, s.v. "Typical of Image of Beast."

[137] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10030.

[138] Keil, *Daniel*, 9:571.

[139] Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:8.

[140] Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 3:8.

[141] "The jealousy evidently sprang from the king's recognition of the unusual ability of these men (Dan. 1:20▸). Subjugated peoples, such as the Jewish captives, were normally relegated to positions of servitude, not elevated to authority in a realm. So the high positions of 'some Jews' were resented."—Pentecost, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:12. "Doubtless professional jealousy that foreigners should be elevated above them was the motive of those Chaldeans."—Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1622. "Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?" (Pr. 27:4).

[142] "The Chaldeans who brought charges against Daniel's three friends were nobles, not just astrologers. The Aramaic term *gubrin kasdʿin* in makes this clear. They were in a position to profit personally from the execution of the three Jews, perhaps even to step into the government positions they occupied."—Constable, *Notes on Daniel*, 40. Calvin suggests their accusers were behind the king's decree setting a purposeful trap for the Jews. "These men watched to see what the Jews would do and hence we readily ascertain how they, from the beginning, laid the snare by advising the king to fabricate the statue."—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:8-12. While this is the case in Daniel's upcoming predicament concerning prayer (Dan. 6:5▸), there is no evidence to suggest such collusion here.

[143] The opposite is true: he promoted the Jewish youths based simply upon their superior capabilities (Dan. 2:48-49▸). "It does not appear that the Jews were unpopular, or that there was any less disposition to show favor to them than to any other foreigners. They had been raised indeed to high offices, but there is no evidence that any office was conferred on them which it was not regarded as proper to confer on foreigners; nor is there any evidence that in the discharge of the duties of the office they had given occasion for a just accusation. The plain account is, that the king set up the image for other purposes, and with no malicious design toward them."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:8.

[144] Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:12.

[145] Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:12.

[146] Concerning Israel's unique election by God: Ex. 19:5-6; 34:10; Lev. 20:26; Deu. 4:7-8, 34; 7:6-8; 10:15; 14:2; 26:18-19; 28:10; 32:8-9; 2S. 7:23-24; 1K. 8:53; 1Chr. 16:13; 17:21; Ps. 47:3-4; 105:6, 43; 106:5-7; 135:4; 147:19-20; Isa. 41:8-9; 43:1-4, 10, 15, 20-22; 41:1-2, 21; 44:4; 48:12; Jer. 10:16; Zec. 8:23; Mat. 24:22; Acts 13:17; Rom. 9:4, 27; 11:5, 28.

[147] Sadly, some who profess to be followers of Jesus are found among those who oppose modern-day Israel's right to exist as a secure nation in the region of the Promised Land with Jerusalem as her uncontested capital.

[148] Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:12.

[149] Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 11.146.

[150] "He could have been sitting next to the king . . . After all, he was next to the king in power, and perhaps he was not required to bow to the image, since he held such a high position and it would naturally be expected that he would be loyal to the king."—Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:4-7. "It might be possible that Dan. 2:49▸—'Daniel was in the gate of the king'—indicates so high a position that an oath of loyalty was not to be demanded of him. But even that we cannot prove though that contention seems very reasonable to us."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:12. "It may simply have been assumed that as the king's vizier (prime minister, for his responsibilities amounted to that high status; cf. Dan. 2:48▸), he was not required to make public demonstration of his loyalty by worshiping the image of his god. After all, there is no indication that Nebuchadnezzar himself bowed down to the image. It may have been that he simply sat on his royal dais surveying the scene, with his closest friends and advisers at his side."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[151] "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administered the affairs of the province, but Daniel's responsibilities required his presence at the palace. With the king and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in the city. Thus Daniel was unable to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this event."—Miller, *Daniel*, 108.

[152] "Daniel may have been absent from the capital at this time on some business of state, and consequently the question whether 'he' would worship the image may not have been tested. It is probable, from the nature of the case, that he would be employed on such embasies or be sent to some other part of the empire from time to time, to arrange the affairs of the provinces, and no one can demonstrate that he was not absent on this occasion."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:1. "With the king and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in the city. Thus Daniel was unable

to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this event."—Miller, *Daniel*, 108. "Since Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter, he may have been absent from Babylon at the time, perhaps on government business in some other part of the kingdom."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[153] This seems unlikely. If Nebuchadnezzar was aware of this possibility and wanted to favor Daniel, then he would not have knowingly placed Daniel's closest compatriots in jeopardy.

[154] "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are officials in the province of Babylon (Dan. 2:49▸; 3:12▸, 30▸). Although Daniel is administrator over the province of Babylon (Dan. 2:48▸), he does not serve in the province, but in the king's court (Dan. 2:49▸). There is no indication in Daniel 3▸ that members of Nebuchadnezzar's administration who serve in the royal court at Babylon are required to attend the convocation or worship the statue. The administrators in the royal court are under the more direct supervision of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and apparently they are assumed to have unquestioned loyalty to him."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:8-12. "He may have been closeted with other members of the king's cabinet, working on legislative or military plans."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[155] "It is true that Daniel's office as ruler over the capital province of Babylon (Dan. 2:48▸) was not specifically listed in the seven categories of public officials (cf. Dan. 3:3▸, though of course, the rulers of subordinate provinces were required to be on hand); and none of the 'wise men' *hakkîmayyā'*, over whom Daniel had been made chief were included in the call for this public ceremony. As a type of accredited clergy serving under the state, they may have been exempted from this act of allegiance; their religious commitment would be presumed to be beyond question. In other words, Daniel did not belong to any of the special groups of jurists, advisors, financial experts, or political leaders included in the terms of the call."—Ibid.

[156] "Perhaps Daniel's reputation as a diviner was so formidable that even the jealous Chaldeans did not dare attack him before the king."—Ibid. "Every thoughtful child has probably, on hearing the history of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, asked, 'where was Daniel?' The history suggests but does not state the answer. Those only were punished, who were accused. Daniel's three companions had been promoted at the request of Daniel, not for any services of their own. With these the accusers began; they did not venture upon Daniel yet. It is no uncommon art of human policy to begin by attacking the inferior, in order to prepare the way for the real object, the destruction of one who stands in higher favour. The first attach is a test of probably success of the later, and may be made with less risk. . . . In the time of Darius, the attack upon Daniel [Daniel 6▸] seemed to be safer, because his services had been to another dynasty."—Edward B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (Oxford, England: James Parker & Co. 1868), 14-15.

[157] "Where Daniel was on this occasion we are not told. Perhaps he was sick,as he sometimes was, and could not be present."—Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 110. "He may have been (as Wood, p. 78, suggests) too ill to attend the public ceremony; we know from Dan. 8:27▸ that sickness occasionally interfered with his carrying on with government business (cf. also Dan. 7:28▸; 10:8▸)."—Archer, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[158] Ibid.

[159] *Serving stained glass of Notre-Dame-de-la-Lattice Lille (Nord), depicting the prophet Daniel in the Old Testament*. Image courtesy of Velvet, 2009. Use of this license is subject to a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

[160] Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:8-12.

[161] Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 101.

[162] Haman exhibited similar anger: "When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath" (Est. 3:5).

[163] "Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was aware of the jealousy of the Chaldeans and was making his own inquiry of the three Hebrews if perchance the Chaldeans had brought a trumped up charge for the purpose of destroying their rivals."—Howe, *Daniel in the Preterist's Den*, 131-132.

[164] "Possibly he had grown fond of them, or perhaps he felt that it would be a pity to lose three capable men especially since he had made a large investment of time and money in them."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:15.

[165] Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:15.

[166] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10706.

[167] Ibid., #10601.

[168] "The conditional sentence does not (contrary to the perception of many) call into question the premise of God's existence. It simply draws the conclusion—that God can save them—based on the premise that their saving God exists."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[169] "The Aramaic expression used here is very difficult to interpret. The question concerns the meaning and syntax of אִיתַי [*'îṯay*] ('is' or 'exist'). There are several possibilities. (1) Some interpreters take this word closely with the participle later in

the verse יָכִל [*yāḵil*] ('able'), understanding the two words to form a periphrastic construction ('if our God is…able'; cf. H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen*, 365, §111b). But the separation of the two elements from one another is not an argument in favor of this understanding. (2) Other interpreters take the first part of v. 17 to mean 'If it is so, then our God will deliver us' (cf. KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB). However, the normal sense of *'itay* is existence; on this point see F. Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 45, §95. The present translation maintains the sense of existence for the verb ('If our God… exists'), even though the statement is admittedly difficult to understand in this light. The statement may be an implicit reference back to Nebuchadnezzar's comment in Dan. 3:15, which denies the existence of a god capable of delivering from the king's power."—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, 1st ed (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press. 1998, 2006), Dan. 3:17.

[170] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10586.

[171] The LXX includes an additional phrase indicating their God is not like the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar which is merely *on earth*: "For our God whom we serve is *in the heavens*."—Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications. 1851, 1992), Dan. 3:17.

[172] "The young men were not voicing any uncertainty as to God's ability, but only as to His willingness. They were not sure that He would choose to deliver them."—Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:18.

[173] Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[174] Earl D. Radmacher and H. Wayne House, eds., *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1997), Dan. 3:18.

[175] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:17.

[176] Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:18.

[177] "When he [Peter] had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him."—Clement of Rome, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I: The Apostolic Fathers With Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company. 1885), 6. "The story of [Peter's] death in the apocryphal Acts of Peter cannot be credited: we are told that he was martyred under Nero, but asked to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy of suffering death on the cross in an upright position as his Master had done."—D. A. Carson, "Peter and the Founding of the Church," in John D. Woodbridge, ed., *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Chicago, IL: Houghton Mifflin. 1993), 18.

[178] "Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. [That is, under Tigellinus and Sabinus, in the last year of the Emperor Nero; but some think Helius and Polycletus referred to . . .]"—Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, 6.

[179] Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[180] "If the setting for Daniel 3 proposed below is correct . . . by implication it sets the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego against the willingness of Zedekiah to bow down to idols. See Jer. 51:59-64 for a possible indication that Zedekiah took part in the convocation to dedicate Nebuchadnezzar's statue."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, 163.

[181] Bob Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety* (Richardson, TX: Bible.org. 2006), Dan. 3:13-18.

[182] In situations like this, asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" can be helpful. If, in the service of God, we find ourselves embarking on behavior which Jesus Himself could never do (e.g., tell a lie), this clearly indicates we are not walking according to our mandate to be conformed into His image (Rom. 8:29; 1Cor. 15:49; 2Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10).

[183] Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 109.

[184] Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[185] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 66.

[186] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dr. Ryrie's Articles* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software. 2010), 101.

[187] *Balanced scales of justice, with Holy See emblem overlaid*. Image courtesy of Ktr101, 2013. Use of this image is subject to a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

[188] Unfortunately, secular definitions of higher law omit God as the ultimate law giver: "No law may be enforced by the government unless it conforms with certain universal principles (written or unwritten) of fairness, morality, and justice." [West's Encyclopedia of American Law (in 13 volumes), 2nd Ed., edited by Jeffrey Lehman and Shirelle Phelps. Publisher: Thomson Gale, 2004. ISBN 0-7876-6367-0.]—Wikipedia This definition is practically unworkable because it fails to identify an objective standard by which fairness, morality, and justice may be measured.

[189] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 70.

[190] Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:28-30.

[191] John Nelson Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible: Ezra to Malachi* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software. 2008), s.v. "Higher Law."

[192] As we noted, while the principle of higher law is clear in Scripture, the *way* the people of God disobeyed the lower law sometimes involved ungodly behavior contravening God's law. God, in His mercy, grace, and sovereignty, upheld the results despite these sins.

[193] Paul is thought to have written Romans 13 in 56 A.D. [MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, xxxii] Nero was Roman Emperor from 54-58 A.D. [Michael Levy, ed., *Britannica 2012 Deluxe Edition CDROM*, s.v. "Nero"]

[194] Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:19.

[195] Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 112.

[196] Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:19.

[197] "The word 'seven' here is a perfect number, and the meaning is, that they should make it as hot as possible."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:19. "Baldwin points out that 'seven times' is a proverbial expression and cites Pr. 24:16 and 26:16 as examples. Hartman calls this "an idiomatic way of saying "as hot as possible," . . ."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:19. "He commanded the furnace to be heated to its full strength (the probable meaning of *seven times hotter than usual*)."—Ferguson, *Daniel*, 751. A similar meaning of "full measure" can be seen in God's promises to punish Israel "seven times more" for her disobedience to Him (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28).

[198] MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Dan. 3:19.

[199] "He wished by the threat of intensified punishment to terrify those who seemed prepared for death."—Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel (Translated by Gleason L. Archer Jr.)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 407, 1958, accessed 2027-05-06), Dan. 3:20.

[200] Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 12.152.

[201] "The urgency of the royal command is demonstrated by the binding of the three men while they were still in their clothes. No time was taken to strip them before throwing them into the furnace. The urgency is compounded by the deaths of the choice men of Nebuchadnezzar's army who were overcome by the heat of the furnace as they rushed to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:19-23.

[202] "The separate articles of clothing, consisting of easily inflammable material, are doubtlessly mentioned with reference to the miracle that followed, that even these remained unchanged (v. 27) in the fiery furnace. In the easily inflammable nature of these materials, namely, of the fine κιθῶν ποδηνεκὴς λίνεος [*kithōn podēnekēs lineos*], we have perhaps to seek the reason on account of which the accused were bound in their clothes."—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:574.

[203] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:21-23.

[204] Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:21.

[205] Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:19-20.

[206] Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 1998), 373.

[207] Many Jews avoid the term *holocaust* (from the Greek ὁλόκαυστος [*holokaustos*]: *ho'los*, "whole" and *kausto's*, "burnt") because of its association with the idea of "burnt offering." They prefer the Hebrew term הָ שׁוֹאָה [*hā šô'â*] ("the destruction," Ps. 35:8). The Knesset (Israel's parliament) proclaimed April 12, 1951, *Yom Hashoah U'Mered HaGetaot* (Devastation and Heroism Day). Today it is simply called *Yom Hashoah*, literally, "Day of the Devastation."

[208] Victims were gassed before being incinerated in the ovens.

[209] "In him we see the development of God's great purpose as to the woman's seed, the representative of a long line of kings and prophets, the kinsmen of Him who is the Word made flesh. It was a Jew who sat on one of the most exalted thrones of the earth; it is a Jew who now sits upon the throne of heaven. It was a Jew who wrought such miracles once on our earth, who spoke such gracious words. It was a Jew who said, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest;' and a Jew who said, 'Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.' It was Jewish blood that was shed on Calvary; it was a Jew who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. It was a Jew who died, and was buried, and rose again. It is a Jew who liveth to interceded for us, who is to come in glory and majesty as earthly judge and monarch. It is a Jew who is our Prophet, our Priest, our King. Let us, then, speak reverently of the Jew, whatever his present degradation my be. [H. Bonar, 'The Jew,' The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy (July, 1870): 209-11]"—Barry E Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman. 2007), 9.

[210] Responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus is shared by: Satan (Gen. 3:15; Luke 22:3; John 13:27), the Jews (Mat. 20:18; Acts 2:23; 3:13-15), the Gentiles (Mat. 20:19; Luke 18:32), the sins of believers (1Cor. 15:3), the sins of the whole world (1Jn. 2:2), Jesus (John 10:17-18), and God the Father (Isa. 53:10; John 3:16).

[211] Eric Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1964, 1951), 118-119.

[212] Concerning the exclusive way of salvation available only through the Jewish Messiah, Jesus: Deu. 18:18-19; Isa. 43:3, 11; Mat. 7:13; 10:32; Mark 9:37; Luke 10:16; 12:9; John 3:16, 36; 5:23; 6:40, 43, 47; 8:24; 10:9; 13:20; 14:6; 15:23-24; 17:2; 20:31; Acts 4:2, 12; 10:43; 11:13-14; 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 8:34; 1Cor. 16:22; Gal. 2:21; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1Ti. 2:5; Tit. 3:5; 1Jn. 2:1, 23; 3:23; 4:9, 15; 5:1, 9-12; 2Jn. 1:9.

[213] Hippolytus suggests this was the work of the angel, already in the furnace: "The fire, he means, was driven from within by the angel, and burst forth outwardly. See how even the fire appears intelligent, as if it recognised and punished the guilty. For it did not touch the servants of God, but it consumed the unbelieving and impious Chaldeans."—Hippolytus, *On Daniel*, 188. The apocryphal work, *The Prayer of Azarias*, mentions: "And when they had cast the three all at once into the furnace and the furnace was thoroughly aglow with seven times its usual heat — and when they had thrown them in, then those who had thrown them in were above them, but the others set on fire under them naphtha, and tow, and pitch, and faggots. And the flame streamed forth above the furnace about forty nine cubits. And it passed out through, and set fire to those Chaldæans it found about the furnace. (Azarias 23-26)."—Edwin Cone Bissell, "The Apocrypha of the Old Testament," in John Peter Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1880), 451. The song of the three youths indicates, "The angel of the Lord came down into the oven together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; And made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them."—*The Apocrypha : King James Version* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems. 1995), Song Three Youths 13:26-27.

[214] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:22.

[215] Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Dan. 3:23.

[216] Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, Dan. 3:23.

[217] Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible - Daniel*, Dan. 3:23.

[218] Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Dan. 3:24.

[219] *Three Youths in the fiery furnace (1776, Upper ikonstas village church)*. Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org. Image is in the public domain.

[220] "From the fact that he saw these men now loose, and that this filled him with so much surprise, it may be presumed that they had been bound with something that was not combustible - with some sort of fetters or chains."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:25.

[221] Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 3:25.

[222] Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1624.

[223] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:25.

[224] "In Aramaic, אֱלָהִין [*ʾĕlāhîn*] is strictly plural, 'gods' (unlike Hebrew, where אֱלֹהִין [*ʾĕlōhîn*] can mean 'gods,' but is most commonly a plural of majesty referring to the one true 'God')."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25. "Son of the gods . . . is the correct translation . . . because the Aramaic form for 'God' is plural and in the Aramaic section of Daniel refers uniformly to the 'gods' of Babylon, the singular being employed when God is intended. Hence, on the basis of the consistent usage, the rendering 'a son of the gods,' that is, a celestial being, god, or 'angel' (v. 28), is preferable linguistically and also contextually, in line with Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual comprehension at that juncture in his experience."—Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1624. "בר אלהין [*br ʾlhyn*] 'The Son of God' (AV) would require emph אלהיא [*ʾlhyʾ*], or better emph singular אלהא [*ʾlhʾ*]. Further, in BA plural. אלהין [*ʾlhyn*] does not elsewhere have singular meaning like BH אלהים [*ʾlhym*] (Ginsberg, *Handbook* i, 2:17; BL 87f)."—Goldingay, *Daniel*, 68.

[225] E.g., "In biblical Aramaic the plural noun *ʿĕlāhîn* may be assumed to have the same force as *ʿĕlōhîm* in biblical Hebrew, which can be rendered as a plural, 'gods,' or as a singular, 'God,' when denoting the true God, the plural form being an attempt to express the divine fullness and majesty."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[226] "The Old Greek, apparently seeking to avoid the designation of this man as divine, translated, ὁμοίωμα ἀγγέλου θεοῦ [*homoiōma angelou theou*], 'a likeness of an angel of God,' probably based on Dan. 3:28▸, where Nebuchadnezzar says that the God of the Judeans sent מַלְאָכֵהּ [*malʾăḵēh*], 'his angel.' The Old Greek translated אֱלָהִין [*ʾĕlāhîn*], 'gods,'

by ἄγγελος [*angelos*], 'angel,' also in Dan. 2:11, and by εἴδωλον [*eidōlon*], 'idol,' in Dan. 3:12, 18 (cf. Dan. 5:4, 23). Here in Dan. 3:25, Theodotion has a more literal translation of the MT with ὁμοία υἱῷ θεοῦ [*homoia huiō theou*], 'like a son of God.' In other passages, where pagan Nebuchadnezzar refers to the Holy Spirit as רוּחַ־אֱלָהִין [*rûah–'ĕlāhîn*], 'the spirit of gods,' Theodotion avoids the appearance of endorsing pagan polytheism by translating אֱלָהִין [*'ĕlāhîn*] with the singular θεός [*theos*], 'God' (Dan. 4:5-6, 15 [θ′/ET Dan. 4:8-9, 18]; Dan. 5:11, 14), since it refers to the one true God."—Steinmann, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[227] "In v. 28 the same personage is called an angel of God, Nebuchadnezzar there following the religious conceptions of the Jews, in consequence of the conversation which no doubt he had with the three who were saved. Here, on the other hand, he speaks in the spirit and meaning of the Babylonian doctrine of the gods."—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:575. "The Babylonians believed that their gods had sons. Thus, when Nebuchadnezzar said that the fourth person in the furnace looked like a son of the gods, this was his pagan way of saying that the fourth person looked like a divine or supernatural being."—Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:24-27. "Both in this term 'son of Deity,' בר אלהין [*br 'lhyn*], and in the synonym for it which is later put in the king's mouth, 'his angel,' the latter is given language entirely genuine to Aramaic Paganism; his terms are taken neither from Babylonian mythology . . . nor from Greek ideas of the sons of the gods . . ."—Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 214.

[228] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:25.

[229] "A fragment from [Dea Sea Scroll] Cave IV containing Deu. 32:8 reads, 'according to the number of the sons of God,' which is translated 'angels of God' by the LXX, as in Gen. 6:4 (margin); Job 1:6; Job 2:1; and 38:7. The Masoretic Text reads, 'according to the number of the children of Israel.' "—Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1986), 367.

[230] "If the Redeemer appeared on this occasion, it cannot be explained why, in a case equally important and perilous, he did not appear to Daniel when cast into the lions' den Dan. 6:22; and as Daniel then attributed his deliverance to the intervention of an angel, there is every reason why the same explanation should be given of this passage."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:25.

[231] "The king identifies the 'son of the gods' (v. 25) as an angel. Comparable Hebrew expressions are used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible for the members of God's angelic assembly (see Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:6). An angel later comes to rescue Daniel from the lions (Dan. 6:22)."—*New English Translation : NET Bible*, Dan. 3:28. "No doubt God here sent one of his angels, to support by his presence the minds of his saints, lest they should faint. It was indeed a formidable spectacle to see the furnace so hot, and to be cast into it. By this consolation God wished to allay their anxiety, and to soften their grief, by adding an angel as their companion. We know how many angels have been sent to one man, as we read of Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15.) And there is this general rule — He, has given his angels charge over thee, to guard thee in all the ways; and also, The camps of angels are about those who fear God. (Ps. 91:11, and Psalm 34:7.) . . . Nebuchadnezzar calls him a son of God; not because he thought him to be Christ, but according to the common opinion among all people, that angels are sons of God, since a certain divinity is resplendent in them; and hence they call angels generally sons of God."—Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:24-25. " 'But I see four men walking about unbound and unharmed in the fire and the fourth looks like a divine being.' "—*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society. 1997, c1985), Dan. 3:25. "Slotki remarks, 'The Talmud asserts that it was the archangel Gabriel (Pes. 118a, b).' "—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[232] For a summary chart concerning the relationship between the "angel of YHWH" and Jesus, see Christophanies in the Old Testament.

[233] "The appearances to Abraham at Mamre (Gen. 18:2, 22. cf. Gen. 19:1), to Jacob at Peniel (Gen. 32:24, 30), to Joshua at Gilgal (Jos. 5:13, 15), of the Angel of the Lord, were doubtless manifestations of the Divine presence, 'foreshadowings of the incarnation,' revelations before the 'fulness of the time' of the Son of God."—M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers. 1893), s.v. "Angel." "Did the King speak true when he beheld the fourth like the Son of God? Little did he know what he said or what it meant, but assuredly he saw in that fire the Son of God, Jehovah . . ."—Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel*, 46. "The 'Angel of the Lord' in the Old Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush is the same One who appeared to the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, the One who spent the night with Daniel in the lions' den."—Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:26-30. "For as the children of Israel were destined to see God in the world, and yet not to believe on Him, the Scripture showed beforehand that the Gentiles would recognise Him incarnate, whom, while not incarnate, Nebuchadnezzar saw and recognised of old in the furnace, and acknowledged to be the Son of God. . . . The three youths he

thus called by name. But he found no name by which to call the fourth. For He was not yet that Jesus born of the Virgin."—Hippolytus, *On Daniel*, 188. "We know well who that fourth One was; so that the rendering that we have in the Authorized Version is correct as to the person, whether it is actually what Nebuchadnezzar meant or not. The blessed Son of God was there with His dear servants in their hour of trial."—Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 52. "Having no spiritual perception, Nebuchadnezzar could only testify to His unusual appearance—He looked like one of the sons of the gods. However, I do believe that the fourth Man was the Son of God, the preincarnate Christ."—McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary*, Dan. 3:25. "Most likely the fourth man in the fire was the angel of the Lord, God himself in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, a view held by many expositors . . ."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:25. "Something of the manifold relationship which Christ sustains to the millennium is to be observed in the many names and titles given to Him during that period, each suggesting some facts of His person and work in that day. . . . *the Son of God* (Isa. 9:6; Dan. 3:25▸; Hos. 11:1) . . ."—J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1958), 478-479. "As the church fathers had already recognized [among later scholars we mention Calvin, Hengstenberg, Keil, Ebrard, Lange, and Stier], this is no less a person than the Son of God Himself, the Word. . . who appeared later in Christ."—Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 103. "It should be noted that the Aramaic word translated *angel* was also used for *deity*. It is the conviction of the present writer that the fourth person in the fiery furnace was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in a preincarnate appearance, sent by God to deliver miraculously His three faithful saints."—Showers, *The Most High God: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:24-27. "The fourth individual in the furnace was probably understood by Nebuchadnezzar to be some type of *divine being* (whose true identity he did not recognize), and v. 25 should be translated 'like a son of *the* gods.' There is a high probability, however, that this individual was none other than the preincarnate Christ."—Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, 254. "The incarnation is also to be distinguished from theophanies, or those appearances of a divine person in human form (often bearing the title 'the angel of the Lord,' 'angel of God'), of which the OT gives instances (see Gen. 16:7; 21:17; Ex. 3:2; 14:19; Jdg. 6:11-22; etc.). These are to be regarded as preintimations or occasional prophetic manifestations of that which was to be permanently realized in Christ."—Merrill Frederick Unger, R. K. Harrison, Frederic F Vos, and Cyril J. Barber, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1988), s.v. "Incarnation." "It is undoubtedly true that the fourth person in the fiery furnace was indeed the preincarnate Word, 'the Son of God.' "—Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1624. "Since the language of the text would have us understand that a supernatural Person was present, we must ask whether this supernatural Person was merely an angel (Jewish expositors) or whether we are face to face with a pre-incarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity. . . . Perhaps, upon the basis of the available evidence, the question cannot definitely be settled, although I incline toward the latter view."—Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[234] Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org. Image is in the public domain.

[235] Israel remains chosen, even in disbelief (Rom. 11:28-29).

[236] Randall Price, *Unholy War* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers. 2001), 106.

[237] Abba Eban, *Civilization and the Jews* (New York, NY: Summit Books. 1984), 286.

[238] Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, eds., *The Berean Call*, vol. 24 no. 6 (Bend, OR: The Berean Call. June 2009), 4.

[239] William Varner, "The Preservation of the Jewish People," in Elwood McQuaid, ed., *Israel My Glory* (Westville, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. May/June 2002), 17.

[240] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries. 1989), 839-840.

[241] Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute. 1969), 146.

[242] Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Rome, Italy: Intituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano. 2000), 21.

[243] Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 119.

[244] Robert L. Saucy, "Israel and the Church: A Case for Discontinuity," in John S. Feinberg, *Continuity and Discontinuity* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books. 1988), 248.

[245] A Jewish translation renders *servants of the Most High God* as "servants of the Supreme God"—Scherman, *Tanach*, Dan. 3:25.. Concerning God being *Most High*: Gen. 14:18-20, 22; Num. 24:16; Ps. 46:4; 47:2; 50:14; 57:2; 73:11; 78:35, 56; 107:11; Lam. 3:38; Dan. 3:26▸; 4:2▸; 5:18▸, 21▸; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28; Acts 7:47-50; Acts 16:17; Heb. 7:1.

[246] "The title *God Most High* (Dan. 3:26▸) . . . For a pagan, it would denote only the highest among many gods . . ."—Goldingay, *Daniel*, 71-72.

[247] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:28-29.

[248] Keil, *Daniel*, 9:575.

[249] Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, Dan. 3:25.

[250] Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, Dan. 3:24-27.

[251] "The episode is forcefully reminiscent of the burning bush. . . . In like manner, the imperishability of Israel is pictured in the furnace experience."—Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1625.

[252] "Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, by believing were saved out of the flame. Daniel for his innocency was delivered from the mouth of lions."—*The Apocrypha : King James Version*, 1 Maccabees 2:59-60.

[253] W. Kenneth Connolly, *The Indestructible Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. 1996), 128.

[254] Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:28.

[255] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10417.

[256] Even Jesus struggled in the flesh when the time of His suffering and death drew near. Unlike the death of individual believers, Jesus's death involved additional cosmic issues far beyond His physical suffering: "He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4); "The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6); "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:10); "Jesus cried out . . . 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' " (Mat. 27:46 cf. Mark 15:34); "Christ [became] a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

[257] Pentecost, *Class Notes on Daniel, Dallas Theological Seminary*, 5.29.

[258] "This decree may also have been an attempt to appease the God of Israel, for the king had mistreated Yahweh's followers and actually challenged his power. Nebuchadnezzar may have feared that he was in danger of divine retaliation."—Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:29.

[259] "After what he saw the king felt he had better take care lest he offend. His earlier remarks, when he was confronted with the steadfastness of his three ministers, may have disturbed him to such an extent that he felt that at least something should be done that might remove whatever was 'amiss' about them. So he proclaims this decree."—Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, Dan. 3:28-29.

[260] Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 53.

[261] "Bel himself . . . could not deliver the men at the mouth of the furnace, that cast in these three, for they were destroyed by the force of the flame and smoke that came out . . ."—Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Dan. 3:29.

[262] "Nebuchadnezzar, however, did not turn to the true God. He neither acknowledged Jehovah as the only, or the alone true God, nor did he command Him to be worshipped."—Keil, *Daniel*, 9:576.

[263] Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Aramaic (Old Testament)*, #10613.

[264] "The Chaldee means no more than 'made to prosper.' Whether he restored them to their former places, or to higher honors, does not appear."—Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:30. The LXX reading restricts their authority to their own countrymen "Then the king promoted Sedrach, Misach, and Abdenago, in the province of Babylon, and advanced them, and gave them authority to rule over all the Jews who were in his kingdom."—Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Dan. 3:30.

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[266] "But the evil of man and the craft of Satan only serve to bring the faithful into view."—Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 65.

[267] Ibid., 73-74.

[268] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:30.

[269] Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 165.

[270] Seiss, *Voices from Babylon; or, The Records of Daniel the Prophet*, 114.

[271] Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible - Daniel*, Dan. 3:17.

[272] Steinmann, *Daniel*, 162.

[273] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 67-68.

[274] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:26-30.

[275] Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, 82.

[276] Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel (3rd. ed.)*, 69.

[277] Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament*, Dan. 3:18, 30.

[278] Ibid., Dan. 3:30.

[279] Deffinbaugh, *Daniel: Relating Prophecy to Piety*, Dan. 3:30.

[280] Greene, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:26-30.

[281] Clough, *Lessons on Daniel*, 11.139.

[282] Calvin, *Commentary on The Prophet Daniel*, Dan. 3:16-18.

[283] Tanner, *Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, 233.

[284] Jonathan Edwards, *On Knowing Christ* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. 1893, 1993), 178-179.

[285] Miller, *Daniel*, Dan. 3:18.

[286] Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, Dan. 3:24-27.

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