

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel 2:46-3:18 | Session 7 | B.C. 603-580

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar has been revealed and interpreted by Daniel and his three friends. The interpretation told of the future history of the world and the domination of the Gentiles over the Jewish people, what Jesus called, The Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). The dream was of a statue of various metals each part prophetically representative of a world empire, 1) King Nebuchadnezzar: the head of gold. 2) Median/Persian empire: the arms and chest of silver. 3) Greek/Macedon empire: the belly and thighs of brass. 4) Roman empire: The legs of iron. 5) Unknown: the feet and toes, a mixture of iron and miry clay.

Finally, the dream interpreted by Daniel foretold of a future kingdom, A stone (which is the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ) that smote the image and became a great mountain that filled the earth. This Stone will crush all the others; It will be a Kingdom that will never be destroyed and one that will *stand forever, i.e., The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This image of Nebuchadnezzar summarizes future prophecies regarding the Times of the Gentiles that we will see later in Daniel (chapter 7) and in the book of Revelation (chapters 13, and 17).

Verses 46,47—

In verse 28 Daniel was explicit in telling Nebuchadnezzar it is the *God in heaven that revealeth secrets*. Then in verses 37 and 43 Daniel named, *the God of heaven*. Finally, he made it clear to the king in verse 45 that the interpretation of the dream came from *the great God*. There was never any hint of Daniel attempting to take credit for the interpreting of the dream—he gave all the glory to God¹.

But for Nebuchadnezzar it seemed to fall on deaf ears for the king **fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel**. The king **commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him**, that is sacrifice and offerings to Daniel. Daniel had made it clear which God he worshipped, and perhaps he was able to stop the sacrifice.²

Between verse 46 and 47, it may be, although not recorded, Daniel said, “No King, do not worship me. It is the God of heaven who reveals secrets!” Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the truth that Daniel’s God is a **God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets...** It is doubtful Nebuchadnezzar became a “believer” in Daniel’s God of heaven. He was likely including Daniel’s God with all the others in his pantheon of gods, it’s just that Daniel’s God, in the king’s view, was the highest and mightiest of all the gods.

Verses 48,49—

¹ See also 2:18.

² Two N.T. passages come to mind. One of Peter who was worshipped by Cornelius (Acts 10:25), and another time when Paul and Barnabas were worshipped by the priest of Jupiter and the people in Lycaonia (Acts 14:13). In each case Peter, Paul, and Barnabas stopped the people from giving them worship by saying, *we are just men*. There is no reason to think Daniel didn’t do the same.

Daniel was **made a great** man (exalted) and catapulted to the top **ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and...over all the wise men of Babylon**. He did not forget his friends and requested of the king that they too should be lifted up **over the affairs of the province of Babylon**. The wise men were about to be killed, but Daniel and his three friends saved them from certain death. One might think they would all be grateful, yet there were some who didn't like having Jews (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego) ruling over them (3:12). **But Daniel sat in the gate of the king** which probably indicated Daniel had some kind of advisory role to the king.

Throughout the first two chapters, we have seen Daniel was a young man who did not compromise his faith in God, and as a result God rewarded him for his faithfulness. In the dispensation of grace, we are not promised that good things will happen to us if we are simply faithful to God. Take the apostle Paul for example. Along with his faithfulness came desertion by his friends, beatings by his enemies, shipwrecks by the elements of nature; Paul was troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down, but he said through all of that he *was never distressed, despairing, forsaken, or destroyed*. Paul had learned to be content in whatever circumstance he was in. That's not a bad way to live!

In all things, like Daniel we can be men of purpose, prayer, prophecy, and integrity. That is, live for Christ. If we keep the furtherance of the Gospel as our goal, then we can say as Paul did, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

How can we, like Daniel, overcome the world and not give in to its demands? By looking for the return of Christ. When we do that, we are looking to Christ which means our life will be occupied with Christ, and the end result is that we will be more like Christ (conformed to His image).

Chapter 3:1—

If we follow the dates in the Scofield Bible, between chapter 2 and 3 approximately 23 years have passed and the year is about B.C. 580. Six years prior to this (B.C. 586) king Nebuchadnezzar would have made his final siege on Jerusalem, torn down its walls, destroyed the Temple, and carried away the rest of the remnant of the Jews to Babylon. He is feeling a bit heady in all of his conquering. The more power tasted by a tyrant the more power he desires. Nebuchadnezzar acts out on his dream of 23 years later to build a **gold image** to himself. Likely covered with **gold**. Where did the gold come from? In part from the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:13).

The height of the image was **threescore cubits**. A cubit is arguably 18" to 24" long. If we use the larger measurement the image would be 120 feet tall and **six cubits** wide (12 feet). Using either measurement, 18" or 24", the image was tall and skinny at a ratio of 12:1. That would make a rather distorted looking image of a man. Notice the text does not say it was an **image of man**, it is only

described as **an image of gold**. More likely than a statue of a man, this was a large obelisk which was common in ancient times.³ He set it up in **the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon**.

This was not the first time a large image or tower had been built in that vicinity. We are reminded of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, and perhaps this was located at the exact site which Genesis describes as **a plain in the land of Shinar**.

Verses 2,3—

At the completion of the **image** a large **dedication of the image** in which all of the high-ranking officials were gathered. Daniel lists eight technical names; **princes** (literally, *satraps*, a governor of a province), **governors** (literally, *prefect*, a local governor), **captains** (literally, *pasha*, a high ranking official), **judges, the treasurers, the counsellors** (another form of a judge), **the sheriffs** (literally, lawyers), **and all the rulers of the provinces** (probably the rest of the bureaucrats in government).

Verses 4-7—

Herald cried aloud, with might a **command for all the people, nations, and language**. Directed to all of the mixture of people within Babylon, including the Jews who had been taken from their land of Judah. When the **music** played⁴, they were all to **fall down and worship the golden image**.

Those who refused to **fall down and worship shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace**.

All the people...fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

It does not take much to get people to follow any kind of a tyrannical order. We have all seen and experienced a form of what is being called, *mass formation psychosis*. People are very easily manipulated into doing things in which there is no scientific evidence or logic for doing so. We think of worldwide mandates like *you must wear a mask! Or, you must inject yourself with this experimental drug. You must test for Covid if you get a sniffle ...*And people follow, like sheep for fear of some sort of reprisal.

In a recently published book (June 2022) called *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*, Clinical Psychologist Mattias Desmet wrote:

“Dictatorships are based on a primitive psychological mechanism, namely the creation of a climate of fear amongst the population... Totalitarianism, on the other hand, has its roots in the insidious⁵ psychological process of *mass formation...Mass formation* is, in essence, a kind of

³ In a more modern era as an example, The U.S. has the Washington Monument.

⁴ **Sackbut**, a form of trombone. **Psaltery**, a plucking instrument.

⁵ Gradual and subtle, but with harmful effects.

group hypnosis that destroys individuals' ethical self-awareness and robs them of their ability to think critically. This process is insidious in nature; populations fall prey to it unsuspectingly...Most people wouldn't even notice the shift toward a totalitarian regime. We associate totalitarianism mainly with labor, concentration, and extermination camps, but those are merely the final, bewildering stage of a long process."

Another aspect of this is what's called *Fear Porn*, caused by media trying to intentionally panic the public. We've seen this all too often with many over the past two years. Dr. Ilisa Kaufman, Psy.D wrote in the magazine Psychology Today:

What is the psychological effect that this can have on you and your loved ones? I have noticed the impact that the over-use of media has on my clients, especially for the anxiety and OCD communities. For example, I still have clients that "compulsively" check the coronavirus numbers and are still not leaving their house. For some, even if the policies and rules in their state have changed, they are unable to move forward. They are psychologically "stuck" in their Coronavirus protective behaviors.

This same mass psychosis will be evidenced during the Tribulation when the Antichrist is in power worldwide. This same worship demanded by Nebuchadnezzar (a type of Antichrist) will be ordered by the actual Antichrist as well. Revelation 13:14,15, *"That they should make an image to the beast...as many would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."*

Verses 8-12—

Nevertheless, there are always some who go against the flow and do not give in to the tyranny. That was the case with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. **At that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews...there are certain Jews...who have not regarded thee:** They would not obey Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow down and **worship the golden image.**

And when someone, like these three, goes against the flow they are going to be attacked. That's what we see here. Daniel and the three others had been appointed to high offices in the Babylonian government. *How could this be; they are captives, deportees, Jews!* Whenever you shine your light of faith, there will be those who want to snuff it out. Be ready for it, it will happen if you are out in the world among *certain Chaldeans* who are jealous of your successes. If you think everyone is going to love you and be your friend simply because you are a *good Christian*, you are going to receive a harsh wakeup call one day.

Verses 13—

Rage and fury are the psychological manipulations that keeps tyrants in a position of power, and fear of reprisal is what keeps people at bay.

Verse 14—

Nebuchadnezzar asks, **Is it true, or is it your purpose *not to serve my gods?*** The word **true** (or purpose) different word here, but it is the same idea as 1:8 where Daniel *purposed in his heart not to defile himself.*

Do you know when the best time is to purpose in your heart to not give in to tyranny? Before it happens.

Verse 15—

The king attempts to assert his power by trying to make the three men doubt their God, **who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?** Nebuchadnezzar is making the claim, don't you know I have the power to **cast you into the midst of the burning fiery furnace?**

Verse 16—

The three men replied, **We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.** In other words, we don't have to give much thought to our answer; we have decided our response in advance, and here it is...

Verse 17, 18—

If it be so...God will deliver us from the fiery burning furnace, and...out of thine hand, O king. What a tremendous statement of their faith in God. It is not you O, king who will decide whether we live or die, but **our God whom we serve, he is able.**

They directly defy the king—yes, they were in the king's service, but they served God. We may work for someone or be in someone's service, and we should do our jobs to the best of our abilities, but it comes down to who we ultimately serve? Our work should always be done *as unto the Lord*. But when we are faced with choosing between our earthly service vs. our heavenly service, we can say unashamedly, *I will not serve your gods.* And while it should be the very last resort, civil disobedience may be necessary. Just be aware, as these men were, there are consequences, maybe deadly ones, that may come as a result of disobeying the government.

This is not an easy worldview to have. When it comes down to actually standing up for your faith it can be frightening and the consequences could be grave. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego appear to be ready to suffer the consequences for standing firm in their Jewish faith. We will see next time.

In our countries we can thank God that we are not faced with life-or-death decisions or having to disobey our governments. We have relative freedom still, in both of our countries. But we should always have a mindset that things could change, and when, and if they do, will we say as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego "our God is able!"