

## Daniel 3

When Do You Put Your Life On The Line?

AND

How Do You Respond When The Outcome Is “Certain”?

### I. Review

### II. Introduction

A. How do you live your life?

1. Are you known for your worship of God?

OR...Are you known for your worship of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)

2. Are you known for your uncompromising character?

OR...Are you known for going with the flow. Just doing whatever it takes not to rock the boat or stick out?

3. Are you known for your uncompromising, principled behavior?

OR...Are you known for your willingness to forego your principles to be at “peace”?

4. Are you resigned to the fact that God is in control and will do what He will

OR...Are you panicky and anxious, fighting against God’s action and control of your life?

B. We are going to look at what a principled life and proper response look like and what the results of those might lead too

C. We are going to look at when you might choose to put your life on the line and how to respond when your fate is “certain”

### III. Read Daniel chapter 3

### IV. When are we in history and in regard to Daniel’s time in Babylon?

A. Actually we are not told when this takes place

B. We can deduce the following:

1. It takes place after chapter 2

a. Chapter 2 took place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (2:1)

- b. Based on the fact that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are included in those called in 3:2 and the Chaldean's statement of their position in 3:12
- c. They have already been promoted to the positions they were given in 2:49
- 2. It takes place prior to chapter 4
  - a. Nebuchadnezzar's response to God in 3:28-29 is essentially the same as in 2:47
  - b. His response to God is not what we would expect if this took place after 4:34-35
- C. From history we might be able to sort this out...
  - 1. Jewish tradition holds that this took place in 586 BC or Nebuchadnezzar's 18<sup>th</sup> year, right after the destruction of Jerusalem to celebrate the final victory over Judah
  - 2. John Walvoord holds that this took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign
    - a. The historical record shows that in N's 10<sup>th</sup> year (595-594 BC) there was a coup attempt
    - b. The ceremony may have been a call for a loyalty oath from all of the governing officials

**V. What is Nebuchadnezzar up too in Chapter 3?**

- A. He has set up an image (3:1)
  - 1. The image is 60 cubits (90') high by 6 cubits (9') a side on the base
  - 2. Interestingly enough the Babylonians worked on a base 60 or sexagesimal system so the dimensions would be in alignment with their numbering system
  - 3. We still use this type of system today for certain things...time, angles and geographic coordinates
  - 4. So the image is tall and slender...not exactly sure what the image was
  - 5. If it was human shape it would have been really out of proportion
  - 6. Most obelisks are about 10 to 1 height to width (Washington Monument)
  - 7. Or it may have been a tall base with a statue at the top



8. It was gold...most likely covered in gold rather than solid gold
9. This may explain why there was a furnace close at hand
10. It would have been dazzling

Think of a 90' high golden object in the Antelope Valley sunshine

B. On the plain of Dura (3:1)

1. Although there are lots of places with the word Dura in the name the plain of Dura is most likely a plain that is approximately 15 miles south of the city of Babylon
2. This would be an easy days travel from Babylon and was in the province (3:1)
3. Archeologists have actually discovered a large brick structure 45' square and 20' high in this area that some believe was the base of Nebuchadnezzar's image

C. He has called all of the government officials from the provinces (3:2-3, 27)

1. These appear to be in descending order of importance
2. Satraps...administrators who were the king's chief representatives over larger areas
3. Prefects...responsible to satraps or potentially military commanders
4. Governors...those who ran the local or civil governments
5. Counselors/advisors...arbitrators
6. Treasurers...handled the public monies
7. Judges...government lawyers
8. Magistrates...the local constabulary
9. All of the provincial officials are here

D. He is dedicating the image (3:2)

1. The ceremony may have been a call for a loyalty oath from all of the governing officials as a result of the coup attempt
2. We saw in Chapter 2 that Nebuchadnezzar is interested in making sure that people are looking out for his best interest (2:9)
3. He responds harshly if they don't (2:5, 12; 3:6, 11, 15, 23, 29)

## VI. The Big Event

- A. Commands all to fall down and worship (3:5-7) upon hearing the music
  1. Probably to acknowledge the supremacy of Nebuchadnezzar's god and his own supremacy over them
  2. Classic Nebuchadnezzar...there are consequences if you don't (3:6, 11, 15, 23)
  3. All bow but three...
- B. The Charges
  1. Three charges are brought against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (3:12)
  2. They have disregarded the king
    - a. Is this true?
    - b. They have obeyed the king's summons (3:2-3)
    - c. They appear to be dressed appropriately for the occasion (3:21)
    - d. Nothing to date in their behavior would lead you to believe this is true
    - e. Then next two however...
  3. They do not serve your god's
    - a. This is true
    - b. In both chapters 1 and 2 we have seen these 3 respond with godly character and honoring Him through their speech and actions
  4. They don't worship the image
    - a. This also is true
    - b. It appears that the men are living according to God's commands (Ex 20:3-5)  
*"You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me..."*

- c. An interesting side note...after the deportation the Jews as a people did not have a problem with external idolotry
- 5. Where is Daniel?
  - a. We don't know
  - b. Maybe out of the country on business
  - c. Maybe he got a loyalty oath pass from the king since he is the chief of the wisemen and working in the palace directly with the king
  - d. Maybe he is so trusted the king leaves him to watch the palace and the city
  - e. At any rate he once again is not where the trouble is
- C. The Accusers
  - 1. The Chaldeans
  - 2. Remember they are of the same ethnic group as the King
  - 3. They are his close advisors and astrologers
  - 4. Even though this is potentially a ways in time from chapter 2 they are still jealous and petty
    - a. They appearently do this publically
    - b. They remind the king of his decree and the consequences (3:10)
    - c. They poke the king (3:12). They know what buttons to push...
    - d. Then they accuse (3:12)
- D. The King's response
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar responds in his classic style to an affront to his rule and authority
  - 2. Rage and Anger (3:13)
  - 3. In pride and arrogance (3:15)
  - 4. However... he gives them a second chance...Is it true (3:14)?

## VII. **The three righteous responders - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**

- A. Why does Nebuchadnezzar give these 3 a second chance?
  - 1. They are certainly men of character as we see in chapters 1 and 2
  - 2. They are exceptional young men, smart and gifted
  - 3. They most likely have distinguished themselves in their positions as provincial administrators

4. Although they haven't obeyed I believe that Nebuchadnezzar knows these 3 are special and of value to the kingdom
  5. I believe they have probably always responded to Nebuchadnezzar in a godly manner with wisdom and tact and have never given a hint that they would ever cross him. He is surprised?
- B. How do the three respond?
1. I love this response in vs 18 and 19
  2. Here are 3 guys who act upon principle no matter the cost
  3. I don't believe this was a snap decision but something they were probably considering as the image is being built and the summons is given
  4. They know the king and his response to being crossed...that the result will be death
  5. Yet they show up and live out their obedience to God's command
  6. They don't bow and say...I'm bowing on the outside but praying to God on the inside
  7. They make a very public show and proclamation of their faith in God  
"We don't need to give a response to your question"  
"God will save us"...He can do it by taking us home or by a physical salvation  
"However if he doesn't perform a physical salvation"  
We still won't disobey Him...
  8. They resign themselves to their fate
- C. Nebuchadnezzar responds as we would expect
1. He gets really mad
  2. Beyond reason
    - a. If you really wanted to make an example of someone what would you do...quick or slow death?
    - b. You wouldn't throw away some of your best soldiers (note valiant warriors 3:20)
    - c. The custom would not have been to leave them fully clothed
  3. They are dropped into the furnace

## VIII. God's Intervention

- A. Nebuchadnezzar can see into the furnace and is amazed at what he sees

- B. God sends a protector for the three
- C. God saves completely
  - 1. No harm to bodies
  - 2. No harm even to their hair or clothing
  - 3. Not even the smell of smoke
- D. God addresses Nebuchadnezzar's pride
  - 1. This time He shows that He is in complete control of the physical world
  - 2. This is on top of showing that He is in charge of the spiritual world (Chpt 2)

**IX. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**

- A. He acknowledges their obedience to God over the king (3:28)
- B. He acknowledges that no other god can save in this way (3:29)
- C. He hedges his bet with God (3:29)
- D. Real conversion?
  - 1. Not based on his actions in chapter 4:30
  - 2. He is closer but not there yet (compare the response to Daniel in 2:46-47)
  - 3. God has one final event in mind to drive Nebuchadnezzar to his knees
- E. He hedges his bet with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...Promoted again

**X. Summary**

- A. God calls us to obedience and the acknowledgement that He alone is God
- B. Our obedience will put us in conflict with the world
- C. We see here that there are "hills to die on" in regard to our obedience
- D. Our consideration of that obedience before the stress sets in is key to our behavior
- E. As we make those decisions we ought to resign ourselves to the fact that God will do as He wills
- F. As difficult as the above may be we can find comfort in the understanding that our conflict with the world works God's purpose to touch peoples' hearts.