

A Study of the Book of Daniel

"Tried in the Fire!"

Chapter 3

Introduction: In the vision of the image in Daniel chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that his kingdom was represented by the head of **Gold**. His kingdom would then be overthrown by the **Silver** kingdom of the Medo-Persians, and they in turn would be overthrown by the **Bronze** kingdom of Greece. Greece would then be overthrown by the **Iron** kingdom of Rome, which would eventually divide into ten kingdoms, which we call Europe today. God was giving King Nebuchadnezzar a picture of what was going to happen "**hereafter!**" In other words, from King Nebuchadnezzar's day down to the second coming of Jesus. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar flat out rejects Daniel's interpretation of the dream, and by doing so, he rejected the historical view of prophecy. Today, many Christians have also rejected the historical view of prophecy.

There are three views of prophecy held by Christians today:

- a. **Preterism** – Prophecy is for the past. This is a false view. This view denies the supernatural nature of prophecy to predict the future. It is presented mostly by agnostics and atheists.
- b. **Futurism** – Prophecy is only for the distant future. This is a false view of prophecy as well. It portrays a God who is disinterested with the pain and suffering of his people throughout history.
- c. **Historicism** – Prophecy outlines the span of world history as it relates to God's people all the way down to the end of time. This view is both moral and true. God is portrayed as the omniscient (all knowing) Father who comforts and protects His people through all times.

The Twin Dangers of Preterism and Futurism:

- a. Preterism masks the antichrist from the eyes of the world by trivializing the prophecies of the past ascribing them to minor figures like Antiochus Epiphanes.
- b. Futurism mask the antichrist by placing him so deep into the future that his coming is not recognized in history. That's why most Christians think he will have no influence in their lifetime.

The Safety of HISTORICISM:

- c. Historicism was given to the church by Jesus Christ; He teaches us that Bible prophecy builds upon the patterns of the past to comfort God's people in the present and warns them of dangers to come in the future.

Historicism in Daniel and Revelation:

Christ's nature as God Embodies the Essence and Truth of Historicism.

In Daniel 2:29 God declares: "what should come to pass hereafter:"

In Daniel 2:45 God declares: "God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter:"

In Revelation 1:4 prophecy comes: "...from him which is, and which was, and which is to come:"

In Revelation 1:8 He declares: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

In Revelation 1:19 Jesus declares: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter:"

Like Jesus Christ, the living Word, the written words of Daniel and Revelation contains the same divine qualities of historicism.

Key Point:

In light of Revelation 1:19, the book of Revelation was written to instruct John concerning “**The things which are**” (present) and “**The things which shall be hereafter;**” (future) Thus, the prophecy of Revelation starts in John’s day and goes all the way down to the destruction of sinners and establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. **It is an outline of history from John’s day until the very end of time.**

Daniel 3:1-6

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

The image is sixty cubits by six cubits. A cubit is eighteen inches, therefore, making the image ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. Remember, God had said that Babylon was the head of gold, and after Babylon would arise another kingdom, represented by the arms and chest of silver, the Medo-Persian kingdom. But Nebuchadnezzar rejects the idea that Babylon will pass away. He builds an image fashioned after the one in his dream, ninety feet tall and nine feet wide, made of gold. The leaders of his kingdom are told, when the music begins to play, they are to fall and worship the golden image, and if they don’t, they will die!

Key Point: Daniel Chapter 3 is a foretaste of the Mark of the Beast.

Revelation 13:11-18

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.”

Points of Similarity to Daniel 3

- a. *As Nebuchadnezzar made an image, so an image of the beast will be made in the end time.*
- b. *In both stories People are forced to worship the image or be killed.*
- c. *Like Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful world leader will try to enforce false worship in the Mark of the Beast issue.*
- d. *In Daniel 3 there is a fiery furnace. In Revelation 13, the fire comes down from heaven.*
- e. *The number of the image of Daniel 3, and the number of the Beast in Revelation 13 have a common denominator of 6*

Key Point:

Daniel 3 strongly parallels the future Mark of the Beast. For Christians living with the threat of death from the beast of Revelation 13, the story of Daniel 3 provides a living example of the faithfulness of God's people. At the end of time, two ugly twins arise against God with global power: *FORCED WORSHIP* and *FALSE WORSHIP*.

Daniel 3:8-12

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

Did you notice one of the key ingredients to this worship was music? Music plays a key role in worship today, both in true and false worship. Is all music played in the name of God, acceptable to God for worship?

Key Point:

We need to realize the significant influence that music can have over people. In a quote often attributed to the 18th century Scottish writer and politician Andrew Fletcher: *"Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws."* He understood that music is a powerful tool, and can either be used "FOR GOD," or "AGAINST GOD."

How did the Chaldeans know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not worshipping the image as they were commanded to? Obviously, they didn't bow down to worship the golden image! Why didn't they bow down, knowing it would mean their life? Because to bow down to an image would be breaking God's Ten Commandments. The first commandment (Ex 20:3) says, **"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."** The second commandment (Ex 20:4-6) says, **"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:** for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my

commandments.” To break God’s commandments would mean they were unfaithful to Him.

Key Point:

- a. The wise men see their chance to get back at those outsiders Nebuchadnezzar put in charge over them.
- b. Daniel 3 pictures a mixture of false religion and the state. Nebuchadnezzar “*made a decree.*” He used his **power of state to enforce False Worship.**

NOTE THESE CHARACTERISTICS:

- a. Powerful world leader forces false worship.
- b. The test is global. *Nebuchadnezzar brings representatives from his global empire to worship. In Revelation 13:12, the beast power commands global worship of his image.*
- c. The forced worship involves breaking God’s 10 Commandments. (Ex. 20:1-17) – *Which Commandments are being broken here? (see Ex. 20:2-5) The second, bowing down to someone other than God.*
- d. The test involves economic decisions. *In Daniel 3:3, “Treasures” are mentioned. In Revelation 13:17, no one can buy or sell unless they worship the image of the beast.*
- e. The test involves a death decree. *In Daniel 3:11, those who did not worship the golden image were to be killed. In Revelation 13:15, those who will not worship the end-time image of the beast will be killed.*
- f. The test is a contest by fire. *In Daniel 3:11, the burning fiery furnace was proof of Nebuchadnezzar’s power. In Revelation 13:13, fire comes down from heaven at the command of the beast power.*

Key Point:

We will discover in our study of Revelation that the beast power has these same characteristics. The contest will involve a different commandment, but the issue of forced worship will still be the same. The book of Daniel gives us the key to understanding the book of Revelation.

Daniel 3:13-18

*“Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and **who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, **we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.** If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”*

Key Points:

- a. In verse 15, Nebuchadnezzar challenged GOD by saying, “**who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**” Because he rejected God’s historical revelation of prophecy, his pride forces him to directly challenge God’s authority. In attacking God’s people, Nebuchadnezzar is really attacking God.

- b. *The Three Hebrew's were committed. (Note the parallel to the test of chapter 1) The King James Version says they "were not careful to answer." That means they did not have to "think" about what they would say. They had already made up their minds to be true and faithful to God. They decided to follow God's truth and light, no matter what happened to them.*

Daniel 3:19-23

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

Key Point:

In verse 18, the king has the furnace heated seven times hotter! Notice that God doesn't keep His children from the fiery furnace. He doesn't promise to keep His people from trials and troubles. Rather, He promises to be with them through the trial and troubles. And like the three Hebrews, in the end He will preserve them for Himself. Notice God's special promises in "Time of Trouble":

- a. Jeremiah 42:11 *"For I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand."*
- b. Hebrews 13:5-8 *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*
- c. Matthew 28:18-20 *"and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

2 Key Points:

1. They are thrown in bound.
2. The soldiers who have attacked God's people are destroyed by the fire. God's people are preserved in the fire.

Daniel 3:24-25

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and **the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**"*

Nebuchadnezzar makes an amazing statement, "The form of the fourth is like the Son of God." How would the king recognize Jesus-the Son of God? As we have studied the first three chapters from the book of Daniel, we have seen that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have all been faithful to their God, even in the face of death decrees. By exemplifying His character, they gave king Nebuchadnezzar a picture of God.

Daniel 3:26

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **ye servants of the most high God,** come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire."*

Vital Point:

Only the Righteous can live in the presence of God's fiery Glory! Many times, when God appeared in the Old Testament, we see the glory of His presence referred to as a burning fire, a smoking furnace, or a consuming fire.

Examples:

- Gen. 15:17 God appears to Abraham as a smoking furnace
Gen. 19:24-28 God rained "fire and brimstone" (literally He rained "from" God)
Ex. 3:3-4 God is in the "burning bush" that doesn't burn up.
Ex. 13:21 God led the Israelites from a pillar of fire by night.
Ex. 19:18 God descended upon Mt. Zion as a smoking fiery furnace.
Ex. 24:17 And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.
Heb. 12:29 Our God is a consuming fire.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fiery furnace, everyone witnessed the power of God. Verse 27 says, "*And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.*"

What a testimony to the power of God! Does this mean that if we were called to go into the fire for Jesus, that He would save us after this manner? One thing is for sure, He is able! But our trust and obedience can't be only if He spares me. We need to be willing to die for Him and leave the saving up to Him!

Why wasn't Nebuchadnezzar killed when he walked close to the furnace? His soldiers had just been killed when they threw the three men into the fire. **Answer:** Nebuchadnezzar was being drawn to God. He was beginning to undergo a conversion in his heart. He was being "drawn to the light" of God's glory, therefore, God preserved him. The soldiers were not being drawn to God, and the fire killed them.

John 8:12 – Jesus is the "*Light of the world.*"

John 3:16-21 – We are either drawn to the light, or we love darkness.

At the second coming of Christ, If, we do NOT love and obey God, the light of His glory will devour and destroy us. On the other hand, if we love and obey God, we will live in the light of His glory for eternity.

Isaiah 33:14-17

*"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. **Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?** He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."*

Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? The Bible says that the righteous will be able to stand in the very presence of God.

Daniel 3:27-30

*“And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore **I make a decree**, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill**: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.”*

The king recognized that the true God of Heaven had answered his question, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands” He is the Author and the Finisher, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, He is able to do as He sees best. We see that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But he still doesn't fully get the picture. Now he tries to Legislate religion again, but an important point is that God doesn't legislate or demand worship! He calls out of love, and showed us His love first, by dying on the cross for the right to save us! Also, we see that God's children are blessed in the end. God doesn't always save us from the trials of this life, like He did for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. But those who love and serve God faithfully will be blessed, and in the end, saved to live with Jesus forever!

Revelation 22:3-5

*“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: **And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads**. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: **and they shall reign for ever and ever.**”*

So far in our study of the book of Daniel, we have seen that God's blessings accompany our faithfulness. We have also seen from the book of Revelation, once again, that one of God's Ten Commandments will be broken and forced worship will take place. Are we ready to stand faithful to Jesus and His Commandments, even to the point of death? Jesus deserves our very best! Think about the words to that wonderful song, “Are You Ready for Jesus To Come?”

Verse 1: The theme of the Bible is Jesus, and how he died to save men.
 The plan of salvation assures us, He's coming back again.

Chorus: Are you ready for Jesus to come? Are you faithful in all that you do?
 Have you fought a good fight; have you stood for the right: Have others seen
 Jesus is you. Are you ready to stand in your place? Are you ready to look in His
 face? Can you look up and say, this is my Lord! Are you ready for Jesus to come?

Verse 2: Don't cling to this world and its treasures, this earth will soon pass away.
 O give Him your heart without measure, He's calling you today.

Key Question:

Will we make a decision to be faithful to God in every aspect of our lives, our aim and goal today?