



Daniel 3

Daniel Chapter 3

Between chapters 2 and 3, there is probably an interval of time. Some commentators suggest as short as two years. Others suggest a time of maybe about eleven. About ten years after Nebuchadnezzar came into power there was a revolt against his reign, which he put down personally. And some believe that this event may have followed that revolt in that he was trying to reestablish himself as that power and that authority over the people, and thus this great celebration with this giant image of gold.

There are some commentators that suggest there is as much as twenty-one years intervening between chapters 2 and 3. It is quite possible that the eleven year figure is the right one. You are closer to the truth probably when you are in the middle. You get in the extreme and the truth usually lies somewhere in the middle. It is possible that by the time this happened, he had gone back and conquered Jerusalem, had totally destroyed the city and left it in shambles, and had brought Zedekiah as a captive back to Babylon.

They usually attributed their victories to their gods. And, thus the strong god was the one that gave victory in battle. And, if your god could not defend you in battle, then he was a lesser or weaker god.

Now, you remember after Daniel had interpreted the vision, Nebuchadnezzar made the proclamation concerning the God of Daniel, "There is no other God, like the God of Daniel." However, history shows us that Nebuchadnezzar was a great devotee of Mark, the Babylonian god. And, many believe that this great idol that he had constructed in the plains of Dour was an image of Mark, the Babylonian god of war, who Nebuchadnezzar had confessed tremendous devotion towards in some of the Babylonian records.

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits (or ninety feet, if you are using an eighteen inch cubit, or one hundred and eleven feet if you are using a twenty-two inch cubit); and of six cubits breadth ;

The number sixty and the number six, does that give you any clues to anything? Six is the number of man, and we know that there is a man of sin that is going to come and he is going make an image of himself that they will put in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. And, all of the world will be commanded to worship this image and if anyone refuses to worship the image he will be put to death. Now, the number of the man, "let him that have wisdom understand, the number is the number of a man; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six." So, in this sixty and six, surely the Spirit is pointing us toward the future. So, this image that Nebuchadnezzar made and demanded that everyone bow down to it with the threat of death for refusing to do so, is a type of the image that will be made in the tribulation period, the abomination of desolation, that Daniel speaks about, when they set this image of the anti-christ in the Holy of Holies.

In Matthew 24, Jesus said, "And when you see the abomination of desolation, that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, then flee into the wilderness." If you are on the housetop, do not even stop to get your jacket. So, this is a type. Nebuchadnezzar becomes the type of the anti-christ. The image becomes the type of the image that will be out in the temple in the later days that when it is established will provoke the judgment of God, the great tribulation period upon the earth. It is the abomination which causes the desolation of the earth in the great tribulation period.

Now, he set this up in the plains of Dour, which is about twelve miles outside of the city of Babylon. It was probably a wooden frame covered by gold. And, could you imagine it ninety feet high and nine feet wide. It must have been a colossus out there. It would have been about nine stories high out there on that flat plain. You would have been able to see it for miles, the shining gold of this great image that was there.

It is possible that this image represents a defiance of God on the part of Nebuchadnezzar, and the dream that was interpreted by Daniel. You remember that in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he saw this great colossus, this great image, that had a head of gold, chest of silver, stomach of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. And, the interpretation of that dream was that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, but his kingdom was going to be replaced by the Medo-Persian, the chest of silver, which will fall to the Grecian or the governments that will rule over man. And, this could be a statement by Nebuchadnezzar saying Babylon will never fall. The fact that he made it of all gold, from head to toe, could be a defiance of the interpretation of his dream. And that he is in essence saying by this image that the Babylonian kingdom will last forever.

As we move into the next chapter, we will see that God had to deal with the pride of Nebuchadnezzar. And in dealing with the pride of Nebuchadnezzar in allowing him this madness, the purpose was the madness would continue until he knew that it was God who established the kingdoms and set over the kingdoms those whom He would. So, it would appear from the fact that it is of all gold that this is a defiance of God's declaration that the Babylonian kingdom was going to fall.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriff, and all the rulers of the province, to come to the dedication of the image, which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

So all the important people of the kingdom were to come. This is a governmental extravaganza, and all the important people within the government were there.

Then the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces were gathered together unto the dedication of this image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

So you can see this great multitude of people around this image that stands tall there in the plain above everyone.

Then the herald cried, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, backbit, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music,

Now, among these instruments there are three of them with Greek names, thus some of the Bible critics say that it was written at a later period, during the Grecian period, because of the three Greek names of the instruments. But, so often when an instrument is taken from one nation to another it maintains its original name. We have a lot of words that we have in English that come from other languages, but they are borrowed from the other language because the product came from there. Cocoa is not an English word, but we use it, and we know what it means, but it came from where cocoa came from. So, it is true of a lot of different products that we have. Cinnamon is not really an English word, but it is a Malaysian word, I believe, that is because it comes from Malaysia, thus we take the name of the product and use it. So with this, three of the instruments probably originated in Greece and maintained there names.

You know that people that want to criticize the Bible will pick on the most ridiculous things, and try to build a big case against the Bible. But, when you really begin to examine it with any kind of common sense, the whole thing just breaks down.

Now, at the sound of all of this music it was ordered that they were to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. If the image was of Marduk, his god, then he is demanding that they all worship his god, Marduk.

And who so falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace..

So, you really do not have much of a choice. You either worship or you are placed in the burning fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was not to be messed with. You remember in the previous chapter, he had the dream and he ordered the fellows to interpret it, and the threat was either you interpret it or you are going to be killed. And, here either you worship or you are going to be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. He is just not a fellow to be messed with.

Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

What a glorious moment for Nebuchadnezzar. Here he has made this great golden image and this multitude of people all over, there in the plains of Dura, bowing at the sound, worship accompanied by glorious music. Aesthetically it was probably a very moving experience.

You know you can have soulish experiences, in worshipping God, that people often misinterpret it as spiritual experiences. They touch your psyche. They touch your soul. It is moving. We must be careful about psychic experiences and misinterpreting them as spiritual experiences. There is something that is very awesome about a great cathedral and the chanting choirs, and the candles and the rustling robes and the incense. It touches our senses. You can have a very sense of reverence, and worship, and awe, but it can be purely in the area of the senses, rather than the area of the spirit. In the same token the Pentecostals can have all kinds of emotions, the releasing of emotions through shouting or waving their hands or through beat, and you can get into a real worked up emotional state that they interpret as a spiritual experience. "Oh, the Lord was in the place tonight it was so glorious. They didn't get a chance to preach. It was just wonderful. Everyone was just so excited." But, it can be a purely soulish experience rather than a spiritual experience. It has touched you in a sensual or soulish way rather than in a spiritual way. And, this often times happen and people misinterpret these soulish experiences for spiritual experiences.

Now, the Word of God is alive and powerful and it is sharper than a two edged sword, and it is able to divide asunder between the bone and the marrow and the soul and the spirit. Now, there is a very close tie between the soul and the spirit, between your emotions and your spirit. And, many times it is difficult to discern between what is soulish and what is truly spiritual. The Word of God has that capacity. And, the Word of God will feed your spirit. That is why it is so important to have the Word of God, because that is what ministers to the spirit, and it is able to divide asunder between what is soulish and what is spiritual.

And, so this was no doubt a very soulish experience. I mean the beautiful music and all of these people bowing down to this colossal image, there was no doubt, it was moving and touching. Soulishly it was very moving and exciting. But, something went wrong to spoil the total effect.

His reaction pointed to the fact that it was soulish. You know a lot of people that have pseudo-spiritual experiences, or they do things on a pseudo-spiritual level as "we are so spiritual, you know, we are going to do this." And, on a pseudo-spiritual thing they excuse a lot of soulish activities, a lot of things that are totally devilish and wrong, attitudes that are wrong, but they excuse them on the base that they are setting spiritual standards. Then they do these things that are absolutely wrong, and soulish and the reaction that a person has really reveals the spirit of the person. Here he is the great leader of the worship of Marduk demanding the world to worship his god, but now these three Hebrew boys have violated his commandment.

Wherefore at that time there were certain Chaldeans that came near, and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. You king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoever does not fall down and worship that he should be cast into the middle of the burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon,

You remember that when Daniel was promoted to this position of honor that he requested that Nebuchadnezzar also set these fellows over the provinces, and Nebuchadnezzar acceded to Daniel's request.

There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not regarded you, and they do not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, do you not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you are ready that at what time you hear the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, that you fall down and worship the image that I have made; well;

He was going to give them a second chance and let the musicians play again, and if they would bow down and worship then fine. It is O.K.

but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; (then the challenge) and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

In the end of the last chapter, Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged the God of Daniel, that He is a God of gods, a Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets, but now he is challenging and saying, "who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said unto the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful (or hesitant) to answer you in this matter. If it be so, (in response to your challenge) our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,

In Romans 4, Paul gives to us the four keys to Abraham's faith. First of all he considers not his own body. He was about one hundred years old, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb. In other words, the first step to faith is not looking at the human difficulties. Secondly, he staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief. Many times we find ourselves staggering at the promises of God. And, because we stagger at the promises of God, we decide to take things into our own hands. "We better do something about this, because I do not know if God is able to defend me." And, thus I better build up my own defense. I have found that if I determine to defend myself the Lord lets me and that is not good. It is better that He defends me. The third step, being strong in the faith, he gave glory to God. In other words, he started thanking the Lord for the son, by faith, though there was no evidence yet that he was going to have a son.

I always like to sort of put myself in the picture to just find out how I would react and respond. And, I like to see myself walking from Hebron to Beersheba, seeing a tent out there and all kinds of herds and flocks being attended by servants on the hillsides. And, this is quite an elaborate tent. And, sitting out under an oak is an old man. And, as I pass by he calls me over to come rest a bit. And, as I sit down he calls in, "Sarah, fix some tea and cookies, honey, we have some guests." And, so I talk to this old man. He seems to be a fascinating old man, but as I am talking with him all of a sudden he seems oblivious to my being there, and he just starts worshipping the Lord. "Oh Lord, you are so good. Oh, thank you, thank you, Lord! You are so wonderful!" And, then he talks to me some more and pretty soon he gets lost in this business of praising God again, until finally my curiosity gets the best of me and I say, "Oh man, you seem to be awfully happy about something. What is going on?"

"Oh, it is wonderful. I am going to have a son."

"You are going to have a son? You are pretty old aren't you?"

"Oh ya, I am about one hundred."

"Well, how old is your wife,"

“About ninety.”

“You are going to have a son? Wow, I can see why you are excited. That is unusual. How long have you been married?”

“About seventy-five years or more.”

“Well, how many children do you have?”

“Oh, we do not have any children. She has not been able to have any children yet, but we are going to have a son now.”

“Oh, I can understand. That is glorious! You mean that God has given you a son. That’s marvelous. How long has she been pregnant?”

“Oh, she is not pregnant, yet.”

“Wait a minute.”

As we continue our journey towards Beersheba we say, “Well, leave him alone. He is happy, you know.”

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and being strong in the faith, he gave glory to God. But, here is the key now, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able to perform. That is what these young fellows are saying, “Our God is able to deliver us from your burning fiery furnace.” You see that is the key to the faith. We know that our God is able. And, secondly, He will deliver us from you. It may be by the fire, but we will be free from you. And, even if he does not deliver us, we are still not going to bow to your image. Now that is commitment. And, that is what we need. That total complete commitment to what is right, to the path of the Lord. I am going to walk this path, no matter what the cost. I am not going to compromise. I am not going to bow to the gods of the world. I am not going to bow to the fashions of the world. I am going to keep my heart steadfast towards God. How do you stop men like that? You don’t!

When Paul was in Lystra and they stoned him and drug him out of town, they thought he was dead. And his companions were weeping, this great warrior for Jesus Christ, this fellow that had such a capacity to persuade people concerning the truth, here he is lying there limp. And, pretty soon Paul shakes himself and says let’s go back into town, I didn’t finish my sermon fellows.

Here are the disciples. They have been threatened by the rulers, “Do not preach any more in the name of Jesus.” And, they have been very strictly threatened. So, they are released and they come back to their company and they gathered together and prayed. What did they pray? God give us the boldness to just continue to preach in the name of Jesus. Give us the boldness to do the thing that got us into trouble. When they commanded them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, they said, “Whether we are to obey God, or man, that is for you to judge, but as for us we must obey God.”

That is the kind of commitment that these fellows had. We are not going to bow. It does not matter. You can throw us in your furnace. Do what you want. We are not going to bow. Our God is able to deliver us out of your burning fiery furnace, and we know that He is going to deliver us from you, but if He does not deliver us, we are still not going to bow. Commitment! Oh, how we need it.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his face was changed (no longer kind, no longer sweet and understanding)...So he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont (or used)to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach. and Abed-Nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. And these men were bound in their coats, with their hose, and their hats, and their other garments, and they 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 Abed-Nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke, and said to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto him, 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;

Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.

they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.

Isaiah, in predicting the future difficulties that they were going to be facing as a nation, there being taken captive and all into the land of Babylon, the Lord is speaking to the people and He tells them that when they pass through the water it will not over throw them, and the fire will not destroy them. And, here we find the fulfillment of that promise.

In Hebrews, it talks about those men of faith who quenched the fires, or survived the fires. No doubt a reference to these three Hebrew children.

You know it is an interesting thing that again those Bible critics who try to place the writing of Daniel sometime in the period of the Macabeans, during the period of the Grecian Empire, because he predicts the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persians, and the fall of the Medo-Persians to Greece, they say that it is impossible that he could have done that. It was written by some other fellow who wrote the book and put the name Daniel to it. The problem with this kind of pseudo-scholarship, critical of the inspiration of the scriptures and of the divine authorship, is that you can not tamper with one part of the book without tampering with the whole, because the whole is one book. And, so if you say that Daniel was written by some spurious Hebrew during the time of the Macabeans and he put the name Daniel to it, and wrote that these events had already taken place, then he is actually writing history. If you take that tact, then what do you do with the words of Jesus, when Jesus attributes this to Daniel, when he talks about, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken about by Daniel the prophet, and Jesus attributes it to Daniel? Well, then you have to say that Jesus did not know about this fellow that we discovered.

So, the Bible stands as a whole. You can not tamper with parts of it without disrupting the whole. So, here again the three Hebrew children, the reference to the quenching of the fire in the book of Hebrews, it stands as a whole.

To me the important lesson here is that the Lord was with them in the fire and the Lord will be with you in the fire. As Christians we are not promised that we will not have persecution. In fact, we are sort of promised that we will have it. In this world, you will suffer tribulation. I hate that promise. But, you will never suffer anything, but what the Lord will be with you to share, and to shield, and to protect. He is with you in the fire. It is important that we become cognoscente of that. So often we feel that we are alone. Satan likes to throw that trip on us that you are fighting this alone. Everybody is against you. It makes you feel like you are just all alone. Never! Never! The Lord is with you. He will not forsake you, and when you go through the fire. He will be there.

and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

One of the theophanies of the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord there with them in the fire. We will find it again when Daniel is in the Lion's den, the Lord is with him in that experience.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, he spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, ye servants of the most high God, Oh, he is learning. What God is it that is able? There is one, the most high God.

come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came forth from the midst of the fire. And the princes, and the governors, and the captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was there a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

The Lord does a thorough job when He watches over us and keeps us. Oh, how I love it. I love this story. I have loved it from the time I was a little kid.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed (another proclamation from the king) be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego,

You see God had intended that the nation of Israel be His witnesses to the gentiles, to the world. They were to be a light unto the gentiles. The nation has now fallen. The witness of God to the gentile world, has been conquered by the gentile world, but God will not leave Himself without a witness. And, though the nation now is not a witness, God will bear witness of Himself to all of these people. Remember that they had all the chief people from around the world there to see this witness of God, to see how God will stand for those who will stand for Him, to see how God is able to deliver them from the most adverse circumstances. And, they all came up to look. These fellows were an amazement to everybody. They were looking. They were smelling, not even the smell of smoke, not even a hair of their head singed. What a witness God gave of Himself, and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Him. He says,

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego who has sent His angel and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

He is acknowledging that this is right. These men stood for what was right and they changed the king's order.

Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, language, which speak any thing amiss against the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, shall be cut in pieces,

Now, that is not really God's purpose to destroy everyone that does not believe in Him. God is more gracious than the king, but this is just the character of Nebuchadnezzar. You have to know the guy. This is just his character. He is going to force them.

Their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promotes Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, in the province of Babylon.

Now, the Bible tells us that there is a day of God's fiery judgment that is going to come upon the earth. God destroyed the earth once by a flood, but He gave a covenant that He would not destroy by a flood again. But, He is going to destroy the earth by fire. And, the book of Revelation describes the events of the great tribulation period, this burning mountain of fire and this fiery judgment of God that is going to come upon the earth. When this great tribulation period comes and the judgment of God during this period, God is going to seal one hundred and forty-four thousand people from Israel that He will preserve through the fire. So the three Hebrew children being preserved in this fire are a type of the one hundred and forty-four thousand that God seals to take safely through the great tribulation period. So, it is one of those types in the Old Testament of things to come. They are a type of the one hundred and forty-four thousand God seals and takes through the fire of the great tribulation period.

Question? Where was Daniel when all of this took place? Do you believe that Daniel bowed to the image? Not the Daniel I know. Not the Daniel who had purposed in his heart that he was not going to defile his body with the king's meat. Now, the Bible does not tell us where Daniel was. He was probably in a far off province taking care of the king's matters, but you can be for certain that he was not there when this event took place.

Daniel becomes a beautiful type of the church that when the great tribulation takes place upon the earth will be removed. It will not have to go through the fire of the great tribulation, but will actually be with the Lord in Heaven. The Lord is going to catch us up to be with Him there in Heaven and so shall we ever be with the Lord. When He comes back to the earth, behold, we will be coming back with Him. He comes with ten thousands of His saints. But, Daniel becomes a type of the church who escapes the great burning fiery furnace by being removed from the area at the time. So it becomes a type of the great tribulation period.

The image, which the world is ordered to worship, is the image that is established by the anti-christ. God seals the one hundred and forty-four thousands of the Jews, and takes them through the fire of the great tribulation. Daniel is a type of the church who is taken out to escape this fiery judgement of God. And, then he appears back in the scene again later on, as we will come back to reign with the Lord over the earth.