

# The Book of Daniel

## Chapter 3

# Introduction

The incident related to us in this chapter is one of the most famous in all of Scripture. The exact time of this incident isn't fully known, but Jeremiah 51:59-64 gives a hint. According to Jeremiah and the ancient records of the Babylonians, known as the *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, this would have occurred in January 593 BC.

# Verses 1-7

The image, probably of the god Nabu, of whom the king was named after, would have been rather odd-looking, since it was about 87 feet x 9 feet. With such odd dimensions, this image, either made of solid gold or was gold plated, would have needed to be supported. The key word for us is the Akkadian loan word used by Daniel: 𐎠𐎺𐎠 (dura).

# Verses 1-7



# Verses 1-7

**The instruments are described by their Persian and Greek names. All but the last instrument seem to have been either brass or strings. The last instrument seems to have been of the percussion family, some type of a drum.**

# Verses 1-7

The assemblage of worshippers for this solemn occasion was the leaders of the various nationalities under the rule of Babylon at the time. Of interest is the use of Akkadian and Persian loanword used by Daniel for all the titles, which indicates for us that he did compose this book during the Medo-Persian rule of Babylon, since these words do point to the antiquity of this chapter. So Daniel writing his book during or after 536 BC fits perfectly. We'll discuss this further once we reach Ch. 10.

# Verses 1-7

The Jews were one of these nationalities under Babylonian rule, in particular, Zedekiah, who was the vassal king of Judah. The most significant thing in these verses, however, is the command that all worship this image. Failure to do so is considered a capital offense and is punishable by execution in a furnace of blazing fire!



# Verses 1-7



The furnace may well have been a brick kiln. The structure probably had a perpendicular shaft from top to bottom with an opening at the bottom. The bottom was where Nebuchadnezzar looked in. Burning as a form of capital

punishment was used by the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks. Scripture even attest to this as recorded in Jeremiah 29:22.



# Verses 8-12

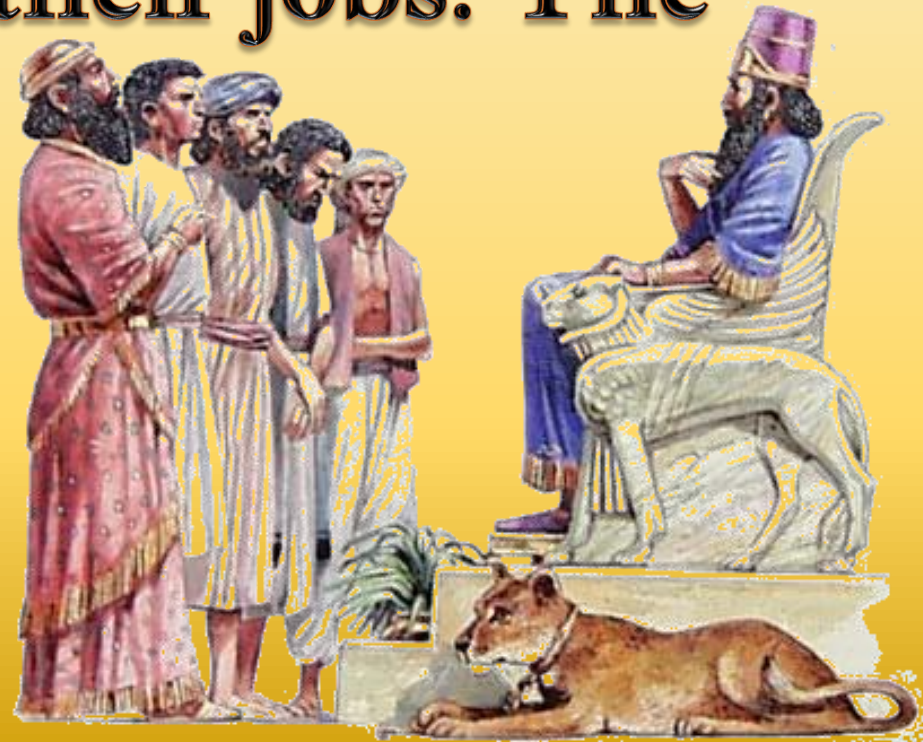
**After the decree was issued, some jealous fellow-professionals of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came to see Nebuchadnezzar. They told him that the three men had not honored the decree and were still worshipping their God.**

**Their charges were three-fold:**

- 1. They do not heed the king's royal authority;**
- 2. They do not serve the king's god (Nabu); and,**
- 3. They do not bow down to the statue of gold.**

# Verses 8-12

The whole purpose was to eliminate the three so that the others could take their jobs. The die is cast! The king must act to show his royal power.



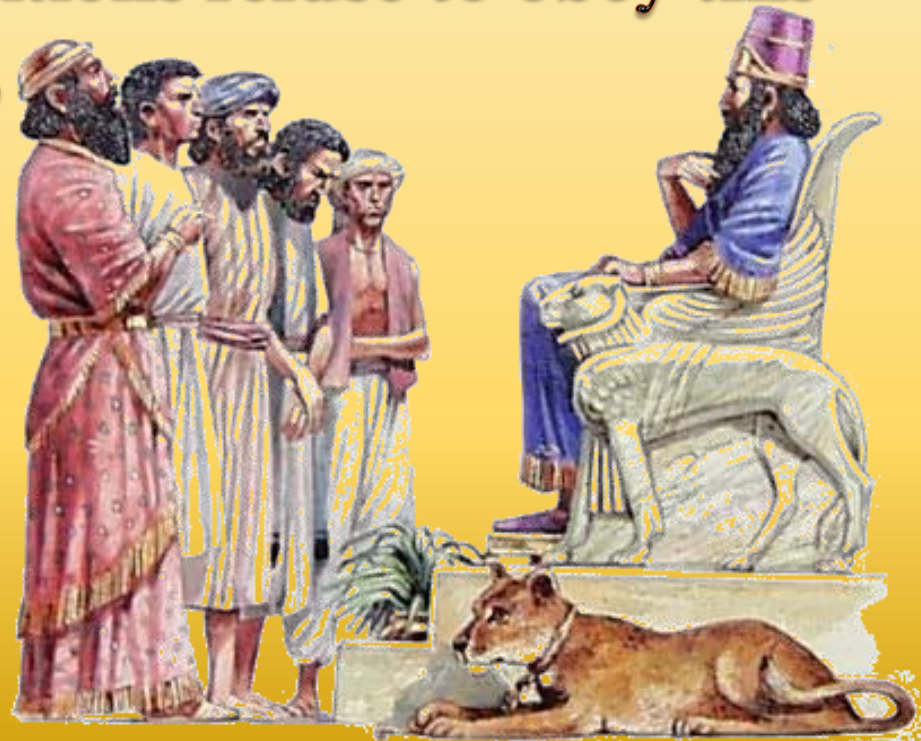
# Verses 8-12

What about Daniel? Why isn't he included?

Remember that the decree is that all officials *from the provinces*, come and bow down. This would include Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (cf. 2:49; 3:12, 30). But Daniel does not serve in the province, but in the king's court (2:49). There's no evidence that any royal court official was required to attend this convocation and show loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, no one could accuse Daniel of disobedience, since he wasn't required to be present to pay homage to the image.

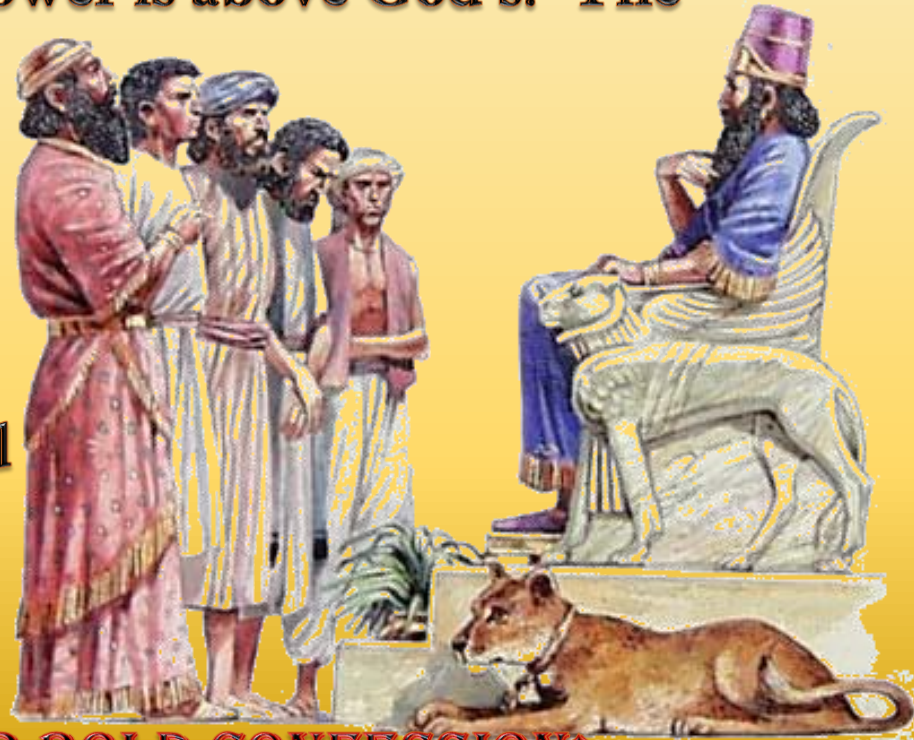
# Verses 13-18

Upon hearing of the breach of his decree by the three men, Nebuchadnezzar has a royal temper tantrum. He is enraged that the three whom he has set up in such high positions refuse to obey this simple demand. However, Nebuchadnezzar does something unheard of. He gives them another chance due to his respect for the job that they do for him.



# Verses 13-18

The king calls the three and asks how they expect their God to save them from the almighty Nebuchadnezzar? The question, in and of itself, is pure blasphemy. Nebuchadnezzar has just taken the position of one which is reserved only for God! Nebuchadnezzar thinks that his power is above God's. The three reply with a confession which would make any pastor proud. They answer that God can save them if He wills. Even if He wills not to do so, they will not fall down and worship any god made of wood and gold. They are implying that anything made by a man cannot and is not God!



**THEY HAVE MADE THEIR BOLD CONFESSION!**

# Verses 19-23



The next act of Nebuchadnezzar shows how much effect the confession has on him. In fact, the confession made him even more enraged. The furnace was to be

heated to 7 times its normal temperature. The men were to be bound and carried to the furnace by the strongest men in the Babylonian militia. These men were to throw the three into the furnace. We see also the results of the order. All of the strong men are killed by the heat of the flames. The situation is now set for the miracle to take place.

# Verses 24-29

You may have noticed a very sharp transition between 23b and 24a? In the Old Greek translation, the Prayer of Azariah is inserted (vv. 24-45); followed by a five verses of prose (46-50) and then the Song of the Three Young Men (vv. 51-90).

Even so, the abrupt transition serves a clear purpose. Our attention isn't on the events in the furnace, but rather to Nebuchadnezzar's observation.

# Verses 24-29

Nebuchadnezzar goes out to the furnace to see what has happened to the three men. He expects them to have perished. Upon his arrival at the furnace, he looks inside. He sees not three men, but four. The fourth appears to or looks like “a son of gods.”

Many commentators, including Hippolytus, Jerome, and Gerhard believed that the fourth man was Jesus; yet, many others only taught that it was an angel.





# Verses 24-29

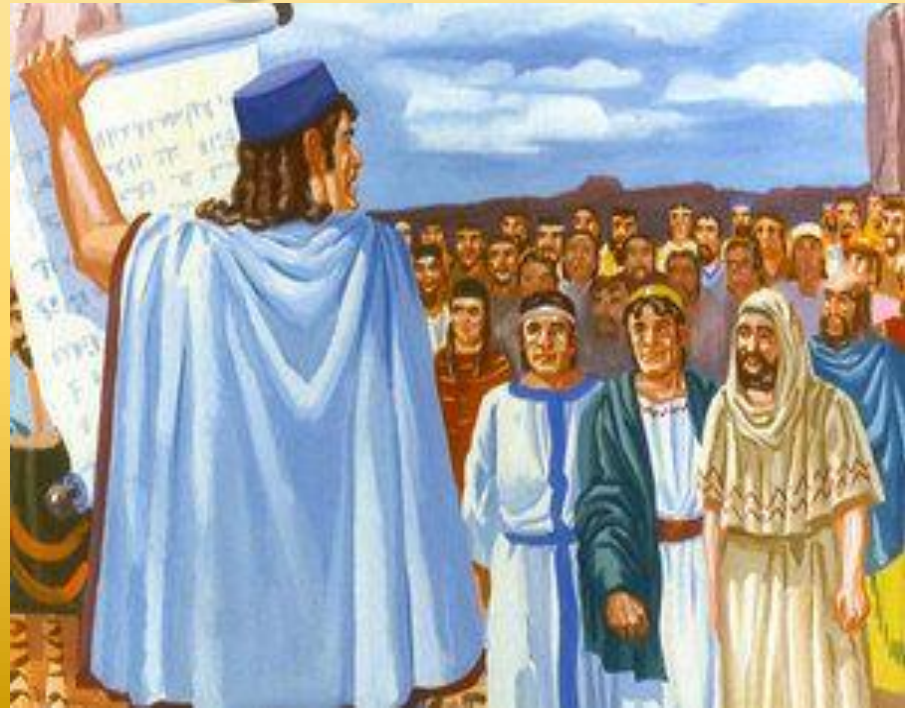
The position of your pastor concerning the fourth man in the furnace is that God would save these three faithful men by sending His Son to preserve and to save them from all harm is consistent with the larger Biblical context.

God has fully revealed His salvation in the sending of His Son, our Lord, to be our Savior and the atoning sacrifice for our sins.



# Verse 30

The final results of the incident are seen. The three are promoted. As in chapter 2, the faithful man is blessed by God. This can be seen as encouragement to ALL under troubles!



# Conclusion

From this chapter, we learn how true worshippers of the Lord, who are under dominion of world powers, could and would come into persecution that would imperil one's life. We also learn that in these circumstances when we remain faithful to the Lord, we will, in a most Divine way, be protected (saved) by Him.