

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL

### Chapter 3

### Lesson # 4

---

At the end of Daniel Chapter 2 we see the providence of God establish Daniel and his three friends into positions of power and influence. Daniel is now ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. This is quite amazing as Daniel is a foreigner and in his late teens or early twenties when Chapter 2 ends. Yet the vision Nebuchadnezzar had in Chapter 2 seems to have fed his pride for in Chapter 3 he literally tries to make the dream come to pass which leads to another episode in the life of Daniel's friends.

#### I. THE PRIDE OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Read **vss. 1-7**)

A. In **vs. 1** we read that Nebuchadnezzar made a huge golden image. Why do you think he did this? Where did he get this idea?

1. How many feet is sixty cubits? What does this tell you?
2. Look up the Scriptures below and write down what they teach you about the sin of pride.

a. **Prov. 8:13**

b. **Prov. 16:5, 18**

c. **Isa. 2:12**

d. **Hab. 2:4**

e. **James 4:6**

f. **I Jn. 2:16**

g. What do you learn about the sin of pride from the verses above?

h. Why is pride one of the most difficult sins to deal with in your life?

- i. What is the opposite of pride and how do you cultivate pride's opposite in your life?
- B. In **vss. 2-3** what eight different groups of people does the text say were summoned to the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image?
1. Why did Nebuchadnezzar invite all of these people and not all the common people?
  2. Write down any modern day examples of Nebuchadnezzar you can think of and explain how their behavior is similar to his.
  3. If God hates those who are proud and promises to judge them, how come people like Nebuchadnezzar are allowed to live in insolent pride with no apparent consequence? Is God overlooking their sin?
- C. According to **vss. 4-5** for what purpose did Nebuchadnezzar assemble all the rulers of Babylon? Why?
- D. How did Nebuchadnezzar motivate people to worship the golden image according to **vss. 6-7**?
1. Did Nebuchadnezzar's motivation work?
  2. God, like Nebuchadnezzar, threatens us with judgment if we do not worship Him. How is what Nebuchadnezzar did different or similar from what God does?
  3. What should motivate us to love and worship God and how does the threat of judgment fit into this?

4. Considering what we are studying in the book of Daniel read and meditate on the short article below.

Researchers at the regional Federal Reserve bank acknowledged the importance of productivity and investment in the economic process but looked at some recent unconventional efforts to explain differences in national prosperity.

The St Louis Fed drew on work by outside economists who studied 35 countries, including the United States, European nations, Japan, India and Turkey and found that religion shed some useful light. "In countries where large percentages of the population believe in hell, there seems to be less corruption and a higher standard of living," the St. Louis Fed said in its July quarterly review. For instance, 71 percent of the US population believe in hell and the country boasts the world's highest per capita income, according to the 2003 United Nations Human Development Report and 1990-1993 World Values Survey. Ireland, not far behind the United States in terms of income, likewise has a healthy fear of a nether world with 53 percent of the population acknowledging hell's existence. "I'm not surprised," said the Rev Eileen Lindner, deputy general secretary of the US National Council of Churches, when told of the results.

"The expectation that there is a cultural belief in hell or perpetual and eternal punishment for wrongdoing will act as a disincentive to wrongdoing," she said. The St Louis Fed's researchers took a two-step approach to linking religion and the economy. "A belief in hell tends to mean less corruption and less corruption tends to mean a higher per capita income," they wrote. It correlated the belief in hell findings of the World Value Series with a measure of corruption produced by Transparency International.

It then looked at the relationship between corruption and per capita gross domestic product and found "a strong tendency for countries with relatively low levels of corruption to have relatively high levels of per capita GDP."

"Combining these two stories ... suggests that, all else being equal, the more religious a country, the less corruption it will have and the higher its per capita income will be." The researchers also noted the long tradition among classical economists to equate a society's honesty, and the strength of the rule of law, with economic vitality. "Adam Smith wrote that one of religion's most important contributions to the economic development process is its value as a moral enforcement mechanism," they said. Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan offered a contemporary echo of this view, arguing in a speech earlier this year that modern business still relies on the word of those with whom it deals as he slammed the recent run of corporate governance scandals in the United States for eroding that trust. None of which cut any ice with non-believers.

Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists Inc., called the study the latest gimmick from the religious establishment to drum up government support. "Religious people cannot rely on their theology to promote what they do so they turn to other things," she said. "I cannot imagine what the belief in mythological beings or things that don't exist can do for business. What about the pornographic industry? That is probably very good for growth."<sup>1</sup>

- a. What parallels do you see between this article and the section of Daniel we are studying?

---

<sup>1</sup> The St. Louis Fed's essay "Fear of Hell Might Fire Up the Economy" can be found at <http://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/re/2004/c/default.html>

- b. Why doesn't God do something to those who deny His existence and mock Him and His Word? Use relevant Scriptures to answer this question.

II. **THE TRIAL OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO** (Read **vss. 8-18**)

- A. What did the Chaldeans do according to **vs. 8**?
  
- B. What three accusations did the Chaldeans bring against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego according to **vss. 9-12**?
  
- C. Do you think the Chaldeans were concerned that the King receive the honor due him or do you think there was another motivation for bringing charges against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? If so, what do you think was their true motivation?
  
- D. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond and what did he do according to **vs. 13** when he heard the charges brought against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Why?
  
- E. What is the implied answer to the question in **vs. 14**? Why were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responding this way?
  
- F. In **vs. 15** Nebuchadnezzar gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego one more chance to commit idolatry and like everyone else threatened them with the furnace of blazing fire. What else did Nebuchadnezzar say to them and what does this additional comment indicate?
  - 1. How do you think God felt about Nebuchadnezzar's comment?

2. Some have argued that the names of the instruments mentioned in vs. 15 are of Greek origin and that there is no way that Daniel could have known about these instruments as he lived in Babylon, not Greece, and Greek culture had not spread to Babylon. They conclude that Daniel must have been written at a later time by someone other than Daniel. How can this accusation be answered?

G. In **vss. 16-18** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded with four statements to Nebuchadnezzar's command and life threatening warning. Write their four responses out below and discuss what each statement teaches you about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

1. **Vs. 16**

2. **Vs. 17**

3. **Vs. 17**

4. **Vs. 18**

5. Imagine being in a similar situation to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego where you had to choose to either commit idolatry or die. Respond to the statements below using the Scriptures.

- a. God would not want you to lose your life over this. He would know that even though you committed the outward act of idolatry your heart would not be in it. And everyone knows as a man thinks in his heart so is he (**Prov. 23:7**). So it would be best to bow down and worship the image and save your life, knowing God would judge you by your heart motive, not outward act.

- b. The Bible says we are to submit to the governing authorities (**Rom. 13:1-7; Tit. 3:1; I Pet. 2:13**). So even though Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not to commit idolatry, they were supposed to

honor the king by obeying him (**I Pet. 2:17**). So in this instance, obeying the king would be the correct thing to do.

- c. When we are forced to choose between two opposing commands of God, God accepts whatever we decide to do.

H. Define boldness and courage. Then look up the verses below and write down what they teach you about these two qualities.

1. **Josh. 1:1-9, 18**

2. **Psa. 138:3**

3. **Prov. 28:1**

4. **Acts 4:31**

5. **Eph. 6:18-20**

6. How would you summarize God's desire for us according to the verses above? Why does God want us to be this way?

7. What usually causes us to not be bold or courageous for the Lord? Summarize what each of the verses below teach you.

a. **Prov. 29:25**

b. **Lk. 12:4-5**

c. **Jn. 12:42-23**

d. **Gal. 1:10**

e. **Eph. 6:5-6**

f. How would you summarize what these texts teach you about fearing men or seeking to please men above God?

g. If you struggle with the fear of man what is the cure? How do you become more courageous and bold as a believer?

I. Read the response of Daniel's friends to Nebuchadnezzar again in **vss. 16-18**. How would you describe their emotional state, response, and resolve? Should we be like these men?

J. Why isn't Daniel mentioned in this story?

III. **THE DELIVERANCE OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO** (Read **vss. 19-27**)

A. According to **vss. 19-21** what five responses did the king have after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey him?

1. **Vs. 19**

2. **Vs. 19**

3. **Vs. 19**

4. **Vs. 20**

5. **Vs. 21**

6. Read the story below about one of the martyrs in what is called “The Tenth Persecution Under Diocletian” (A.D. 284-305). Then answer the questions that follow:

The good Christian Victor spent much time visiting the sick and weak, and gave considerable money to the poor. Being so well known as a charitable Christian, he soon came to the attention of the emperor and was arrested and ordered to be bound and dragged through the streets, all the while being beaten and stoned by pagans along the way. His steadfastness was condemned as stubbornness and he was ordered to be stretched on the rack and tortured while it was being done. Victor endured the ordeal with great courage, and when his tormentors grew tired of their work, they put him into a cell. There, he preached Christ to his jailers and three of them, Alexander, Longinus, and Felician, received Christ.

When news of this reached the emperor, he ordered the three jailers to the executioner’s block where they were beheaded. Victor was remanded to the rack and beaten with clubs and then returned to prison.

The third time he was examined, a pagan altar with an idol on it was brought in and he was given incense and ordered to offer it to the idol. Incensed at this, Victor drove his foot against the altar and overturned it. This so enraged the emperor, who was there, that he ordered Victor’s foot to be cut off. He was then thrown into a grain mill and crushed beneath the mill stones.<sup>2</sup>

- a. The story above is one out of the many martyr’s stories that have been preserved. Countless more have died for the faith, their stories having never been written down. We have learned that God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace. Why didn’t he deliver Victor? Why didn’t He deliver thousands of others who suffered even worse tortures for Christ? Why doesn’t He rescue those today who are suffering torture and martyrdom?
- b. Often you hear people say things like, “If God is such a good God, then why does He allow things like this to happen? Why doesn’t He intervene and destroy the evil doers?” How do we answer questions like this?
- c. If you were forced to either deny Christ or die a torturous death, do you think you would have the courage to die a martyr’s death? Why or why not?

---

<sup>2</sup> Harold Chadwick, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, pg. 33.



- B. According to **vs. 22** how hot was the furnace heated? What happened to the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace of blazing fire?
- C. If you read **vs. 23** and read no further, what would you conclude happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Why?
- D. According to **vss. 24-25** what happened when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the blazing fire and how did the king respond? Why?
- E. Look up the definitions of the two words below and then answer the questions that follow.
1. What is a "Theophany?" (Give examples from the Bible)
  2. What is a "Christophany?" (Give examples from the Bible)
  3. Who do you think was the fourth person in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Why?
- F. How did Nebuchadnezzar's attitude change in **vs. 26** as compared to **vs. 13**? What brought about the change? Why?
- G. In **vs. 27** we read about the men who turned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in to the king. What did they observe and how do you think they felt after examining those they just finished trying to destroy?
- H. Look up the Scriptures below. Write down what they teach you about God and His relationship to those who fear Him.
1. **Psa. 18:2-3**
  2. **Psa. 91:1-4**

3. **Isa. 41:10-14**

4. **Isa. 51:7-8**

5. What do the above verses teach us about God's care of those who love Him?

6. Because God has made these promises, does this mean that Christians never suffer trial or persecution? If so, then how can they be true?

7. In your everyday life why is it important for you to remember that God cares and provides for those who are His?

IV. **THE HUMBLING OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Read vss. 28-30)**

A. Look up Dan. 4:37 and 5:20. What seems to be Nebuchadnezzar's besetting sin? See if you can find some key Scriptures that speak to this sin.

B. Moments before the events recorded in **vss. 28ff**, Nebuchadnezzar was demanding that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego commit idolatry. How did the king respond after seeing God rescue Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire?

C. According to **vs. 28** what three things did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to do for their God? Should we be willing to do these same things? Why?

D. In **vs. 29** what did Nebuchadnezzar do to honor the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

1. Where else in the book of Daniel does Nebuchadnezzar threaten to tear people limb from limb and make their house a rubbish heap? Do you think this was an idle threat?
  2. What do you think were the ramifications of King Nebuchadnezzar's decree in Babylon?
  3. What, according to **vs. 29**, caused Nebuchadnezzar to be so impressed with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God? Should we be impressed also? Why or why not?
- E. By the time we get to **vs. 30** the story situation has changed for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from a life threatening situation to a life prospering situation. Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego know this was going to happen? Why or why not?
1. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't know it was going to happen then how come they had so much boldness and courage?
  2. How does God want you to apply the lessons we have learned from this study to your life? See the lessons listed below.
    - a. Sin of Pride
    - b. Fearing God
    - c. Not fearing men
    - d. God's promises to care and protect us
    - e. The certain reward all believers are promised