

- We don't know how much time has elapsed from the end of chapter 2 to this incident. The Septuagint indicates it was in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, or one year before the fall of Jerusalem. Some, however, believe this event took place closer to the beginning of his reign, perhaps shortly after his dream of chapter 2.
- In chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar had a terrifying and amazing dream, which Daniel interpreted. The king was told he was the "head of gold" on a huge statue of different metals. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar decided he would really underscore that point with this statue. At any rate, it seems obvious he has not learned all he needs to know about the God of Israel, and the God of all mankind.
- Notice that **Daniel seems oddly missing from this event**. He may or may not have been present. If he was, we can be sure he did not bow down to the image. We don't know where he was. There are all kinds of explanations and thoughts about this, but regardless, he is not mentioned, which gives rise to various ideas and speculation about a possible spiritual aspect of his absence. We'll talk about that later.

¹*Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

- Perhaps, as a result of his dream in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar constructed a large statue. (see note above).
- This **enormous image** was 60 cubits in height. A cubit is about 18 inches (actually anything up to about 25" depending on what cubit it is), thus bringing the image to a height of at least 90 feet and a width of 9 feet. This imposing structure, perhaps in the figure of a man could undoubtedly be seen for miles due to the flat nature of the area just south of Babylon. It was as tall as a 9 story building.
- Various explanations have been offered for the **strange dimensions of the image**, 90 feet high and 9 feet wide (a 10 to 1 ratio). It may not have represented Nebuchadnezzar physically, but could have been an obelisk. It could have been a distorted figure, or the height could have included a pedestal on which the image was set. The word used for "image" means it could have looked like a man, or human figure, but the word does not mean it had to be this shape. Either way, it was an engineering marvel for those times.
- **The use of the "6"s is deliberate (60 cubits, 6 cubits)**. Six is always symbolic for man. Seven is the number for perfectly complete, so six is one less than that, or incomplete. In scripture we see this used over and over again. Man was created on the 6th day, Goliath was measured in 6's (fingers, toes, etc.), 6 steps on Solomon's throne, 6 branches on the Menorah (+1 for completeness in Christ!) In our society, man is deified – this is humanism. The ultimate use of the number 6 is in Revelation 13. Six always stands for man in scripture, incomplete.



- Some scholars think that Nebuchadnezzar constructed this image in memory of his father, Nabopolassar. Others say he made it to Bel, the pagan god of Babylon. It is **probable that he made it of himself**. Daniel had declared that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in the image of his dream. Instead of humbling himself before God, the dream caused Nebuchadnezzar to be filled with pride, and he made an entire image of gold to represent himself, and the kingdom he had built.
- *“...the plain of Dura...”* was a term used throughout Mesopotamia for a flat and expansive area, usually between mountains, which allowed a great multitude to assemble. The qualifier is “in the province of Babylon” so we know where it was. This assembly was for the worship of the image, which was actually the worship of the king, something forbidden to Jews. They were to worship no one, and nothing (no idols) except Yahweh.

²And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

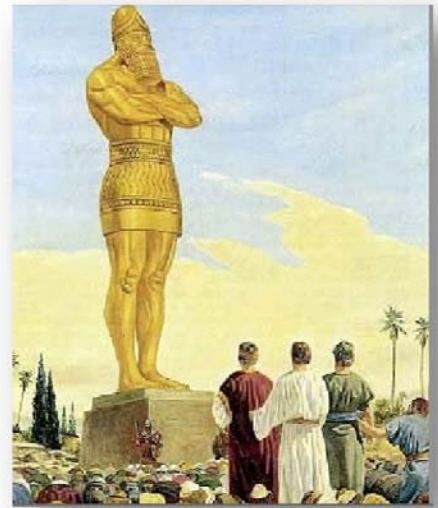
- The king called his **administrators and official personnel together to the dedication of the great image**. They apparently came from every area of the realm and represented practically his total officialdom. The Aramaic names for these officials indicate that just about every type of governmental figure including administrative, civil, military, private sector, etc. were called. Everyone who was anyone was required to be there. “Satraps” were the chief representatives of the king, “prefects” were military commanders, “governors” were civil administrators, “counselors” were advisers to the king, “treasurers” were the financial folks, “judges” administrated the laws of Babylon, “magistrates” (sometimes translated as “sheriffs”) kept the laws and passed judgment, and “all the officials” were most likely those immediately under these others.
- Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to unite together the tribes and tongues and peoples of his kingdom into one great totalitarian government. Some speculate that this was perhaps due to an actual revolt that is recorded in 596 BC. What he was doing however, has been seen before in Genesis 11. In this unification effort he was attempting to institute a world religion. **This was a repetition of the tower of Babel—a forming of one religion for the world – only this time Nebuchadnezzar would be the object of worship.** AND THIS WILL HAPPEN AGAIN! See Revelation 13:4-15, 14:9-11, 19:20, 20:4, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT NOTE.

⁴Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵“that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶“and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

- Some who claim that Daniel is a second-century forgery argue that their case is proven by the **presence of three words of Greek origin in verse 5**. This is because the Greek language was not widely spread and used until the conquests of Alexander the Great (c. 325 B.C.). Critics claim that a sixth-century Daniel would not have used Greek words. But the three Greek words are the names of musical instruments: (1) the **harp** (2) the **psaltery** and (3) **dulcimer**.

- Trade and cultural exchanges and military excursions **easily account for the passing of these names of Greek instruments into Babylonian use**, and their Greek names also into the Aramaic language. Similar occurrences in English are the uses of Italian words such as piano and violin, and the Hawaiian ukulele. (Note: If Daniel was really written around 165 B.C. the question is really why there are not many more Greek words found in the text. This actually becomes **strong evidence that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C.** just as it claims. Remember that Jesus Himself authenticated this book. That's enough argument by itself to support the early dating.
- "...fall down and worship..."** This goes beyond just loyalty to the king. It is now in the realm of worship, a religious action. This is state-sponsored religion, something we still see enforced in various regions of the world.
- The **punishment for failure to bow and worship** before the great image (in violation of God's second commandment, Ex 20:4–5 as well as Leviticus 26:1 and Deuteronomy 16:22) was to be cast into a **burning fiery furnace**. This was the method of execution for Babylon and many other ancient cultures.

⁷So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.



- "All the people ... fell down and worshiped the gold image"**, shows how universally and quickly masses of people generally obey when their lives are at stake. There was most likely a large degree of fear involved in this "worship." It took courage and spiritual backbone not to bend with the rest. Revelation references this kind of worship for the final world ruler.
- There may have been many who were not convinced in their hearts, but they gave no visible evidence that this was the case. They may have been inwardly attempting to justify their position by some form of rationalization. We rationalize our own compromises today, also.
- This must have been **quite a sight on the plains of Dura**. This huge 9 story figure in the center of thousands of people, all bowing down each time they heard the music. Nebuchadnezzar is no doubt pleased with the response, until he hears of three who did not bow. His attitude about worship, and about WHO alone deserves it, is going to change very soon—here, and in the next chapter.

⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰"You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; ¹¹"and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

- "...certain Chaldeans..."** were probably those who were envious of the position of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, (perhaps some who were spared in chapter 2 by Daniel and his friends) – jealousy rears its ugly head! The word "Chaldean" implies astrologers, so these complainers were part of the "wise men" of Babylon, and probably those whose lives had been spared by Daniel and his friends.

- These “wise men” are **playing to the pride of the king**. Jealousy is a motivating factor here. They came before Nebuchadnezzar after the musical invitation to bow had been sounded. They eagerly observed that these Jews had refused to worship the image. Perhaps these guys even planned all this, knowing what would happen. We will see this kind of plot again against Daniel in chapter 6.
- This is the **third time the list of these instruments is presented**. Perhaps this is the Chaldean Philharmonic Orchestra—a very famous orchestra in that day—at least on this day! We have no indication, or note of importance, as to why these were mentioned so often. Perhaps they were special instruments selected to compliment the event and be associated with it.



¹²“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 paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

- **Instead of rationalizing their way into compromise and sin**, these three Jewish boys stood faithful to the Lord. They disobeyed a civil law in order to obey God. We have all become masters of compromise in our culture, so these young men are testimonies to the kind of commitment we are to have to God. The apostles were often in these kinds of positions, and here is how they answered: *“Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”* (Acts 5:29)
- **Archeologists discovered** a 5-sided clay prism in the ruins at Babylon which is now on display in the Istanbul Museum. The prism lists the names of the administrators of that day. Listed by name are HANUNU – a variation of Hananiah (Shadrach), as the Chief of the Royal Merchants, MUSHAL-E-MARDUK (minus the marduk, a god of Babylon = Meshach (mishael), no title listed, and ARDI-NABU – an alternative form of Abed-nego, or Ananiah, the Secretary to the Crown Prince. It is interesting and exciting whenever the Bible is proven correct, even down to the names of people, places, and dates. We can have confidence in the trustworthiness of the Word of God!
- A similar incident occurred many years later in the time of Darius (of Persia). Informers snitched on Daniel for violating a decree against prayer to any god or ruler but the king (6:6–13). The outcome was similar: Daniel was thrown to the lions (6:16). On both occasions, God delivered His faithful followers from death (though not from the threat of death).

COMMENTARY: What would it be like if government “stings” today exposed believers practicing their faith? Imagine if the only way to entrap you would be to “catch” you being loyal to God!

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?”

- *“...Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury,...”* The accusation startled and enraged the king. They had disregarded the king himself, as well as his new image. This was an act of treason; and it was, of course, punishable by death. Nebuchadnezzar was swelled with pride before this incident, which only enhanced his current fury.

- ***“Is it true,...”*** When they were brought in before him, Nebuchadnezzar personally asked, half in unbelief, whether they had disobeyed his clear command. This renowned ruler who had recently promoted these men and offered them power and prestige could not imagine the young Hebrews not being loyal to him or even worshipping him, or perhaps even giving up their lives for a mere “religious principle.”

¹⁵“Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

- Nebuchadnezzar offered them a second chance to obey (they must have really been favored to rate this second chance), and he repeated the warning of the fiery furnace as penalty for not obeying his orders.
- ***“And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”*** Nebuchadnezzar’s pride shows in this statement, and he is taunting the One true God. In his opinion, the king was omnipotent, not the God of these Hebrew boys.

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷“If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸“But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

- ***“...we have no need to answer you in this matter.”*** They address Nebuchadnezzar, but they do not say, *“O king, live forever.”* They have carefully weighed the consequences of refusing to obey the king. They have counted the cost and are not being “careful” (*as it is translated in some versions*) in giving an answer; in other words, they are not concerned for their own well-being in the answer they give to the king.
- ***..our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ...”*** These young men had complete confidence in God’s ability to deliver them. They knew of His power and might, and trusted it. Whether God did deliver them was up to Him. They would faithfully serve Him either way, and they would shortly be delivered, either by life or by death. They affirmed their confidence in God to deliver them from death, but also declared that they would still remain faithful to YAHWEH and refuse to worship the idol at Dura even if God did not deliver them from death.
- ***“But if not, let it be known to you, O king...”*** **If not** does not mean a lack of faith of these Jewish boys. They recognized that sometimes it was the will of God for men of God to die “in the line of duty” as they served Him. They knew that God was able to deliver them, but did not know, at that time, if it was His will – that didn’t matter. This was extraordinary faith, and was designed to make a point to a very proud and arrogant king that even if their God did not deliver them, He was fully capable of doing so, and they wanted this king to know it.



¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

- *“Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury...”* Nebuchadnezzar had an uncontrollable temper. In an extreme emotional outrage, he vented his anger against these men whom he had previously favored. Nebuchadnezzar was soundly rebuked, and he knew it. He had so graciously offered them a second chance to bow to the image, but now they had just practically slapped him in the face. Note that the expression on his face changed. He admired these young men, but now they had truly angered him, and they would be subject to all the fury of this wildly temperamental man. The king’s pride caused him to make a very rash decision.
- *“...commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.”* The fire in the furnace was to be built up *seven times* larger and hotter than usual. This was completely unnecessary, but in his anger he is making the point that HE is mightier.
- *“...seven times more ...”* This may suggest completeness, or it may be a hyperbole (an exaggeration for effect); Seven times hotter would have meant raising the temperature from about 1,500 degrees F to 10,500 degrees F. Cremations are normally run at 1,800 degrees F. It was most likely not 10,000 degrees, but it was hotter than it ever was before.
- The furnace used in the attempt to execute Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego may have been one of the brick kilns widely used by the Babylonians to make bricks, which were generally used in construction. However, the Aramaic word used here (*tanup*) implies an execution chamber. It was normal practice at this time to execute prisoners in this way.
- *“...he commanded certain mighty men of valor...”* The king is going to sorely regret this command to these special “men of valor.” He will lose all of them to his pride and anger.
- *“...were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments...”* Babylonian dress may have included an early form of “leggings” or “hosen” as the KJV translates. Also “turbans” can mean “hats,” not the turbans we think of. At any rate, these Jewish KJV men were thrown fully clothed, in all their official regalia, into the furnace.

²²Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

- *“...the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego ...”* Unfortunately, the overheated furnace killed those “mighty men of valor” that would have been valuable to Nebuchadnezzar. His pride cost him these men’s lives.
- It is always amazing when we observe the secular world trying to **justify or explain miracles that are portrayed in the Bible**. Perhaps you have seen on TV or read some fanciful scientific theories about these kinds of furnaces and so-called “cold spots” – meaning that it was maybe possible these three men could have survived due to such a cold spot within the furnace. However, we will see in a moment that this is highly unlikely. This fire would have had to be very selective. And, it was hot enough to kill men even on the outside. These kinds of explanations do not consider that God works in miracles. We can never hope to understand or explain the “how” of it, and it doesn’t matter. A miracle is something outside our understanding.

- The three “traitors” are thrown into the furnace, at the cost of some mighty warriors. **They are bound and inside the furnace at this point.** If those mighty men died due to the excessive heat outside, why then didn’t the three Hebrew men die as well? Trying to explain God’s miracles is just plain pointless and arrogant.
- **THE “SONG (OR PRAYER) OF AZARIAH AND THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN”...** In the Catholic Bible and in the Apocrypha, a beautiful passage of scripture is included between verses 23 and 24. In some places it is included as a separate piece (*titled the Song [or Prayer] of Azariah*). It records what the three Jewish boys spoke in the midst of the furnace. Jews accept this as the inspired Word of God, and it is included in their scriptures as well. Protestants will include it in copies of the Apocrypha, which is generally *not* accepted as the “inspired” Word of God, but is highly useful in understanding many Biblical times. There are three such entries that reportedly record events during the time of Daniel, and this is one of them. All of them are interesting, and this one in particular certainly sounds “inspired.” It is included here to enhance our learning about these three young men who had such a committed dedication to Yahweh. This version is from the World English Bible.

And they walked in the midst of the fire, praising God and blessing the Lord. Then Azariah stood up and prayed in this way; and opening his mouth in the midst of the fire, he said,

Blessed are you, O Lord God of our fathers; your name is worthy to be praised and glorified forevermore: For you are righteous in all the things which you have done to us; yes, true are all your works, your ways are right, and all your judgments are truth. In all the things which you have brought upon us and upon the holy city of our fathers, even Jerusalem, you have executed true judgment; for according to truth and judgment you brought all these things upon us because of our sins. For we have sinned and committed iniquity, departing from you. In all things have we trespassed and not obeyed your commandments, nor kept them, neither have we done as you have commanded us, so that it might go well with us. Therefore all that you have brought upon us and everything which you have done to us, you have done in true judgment. And you delivered us into the hands of lawless enemies, most hateful forsakers of God, and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world. And now we cannot open our mouths; we have become a shame and a reproach to your servants and to those who worship you. Yet do not deliver us up completely, for your name's sake, nor completely annul your covenant. And do not cause your mercy to depart from us, for your beloved Abraham's sake, for your servant Isaac's sake, and for your holy Israel's sake, to whom you have spoken and promised that you would multiply their seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which lies upon the seashore. For we, O Lord, have become less than any nation and are oppressed this day in all the world because of our sins. Neither is there at this time any prince, or prophet, or leader, or burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, or place, to sacrifice before you in order to find mercy. Nevertheless, with a contrite heart and a humble spirit, let us be accepted. Just as in the burnt offerings of rams and bullocks, and just as in ten thousands of fat lambs, so let it be with our sacrifice in your sight on this day; and grant that we may completely follow you, for those who put their trust in you shall not be confounded. And now we follow you with all our heart; we fear you and seek your face. Do not put us to shame, but deal with us according to your loving kindness and according to the multitude of your mercies. Deliver us also according to your marvelous works and give glory to your name, O Lord; and let all those who do harm to your servants be ashamed; and let them be confounded in all their power and might, and let their strength be broken; and let them know that you are God, the only God, and glorious over the whole world."

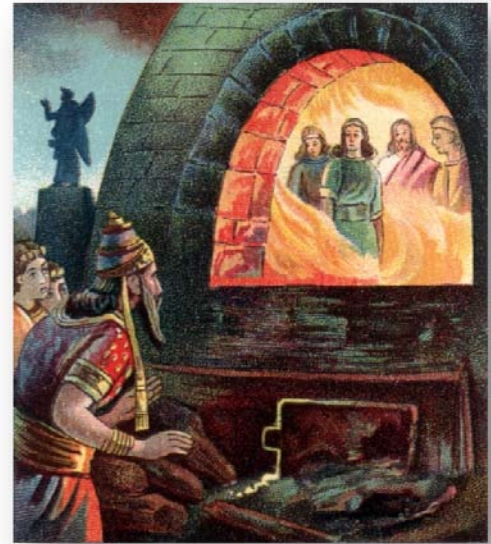
And the king's servants, who put them in, continued to make the oven hot with resin, pitch, tar, and small wood, so that the flame streamed forth above the furnace for forty nine cubits. And it passed through and burned those Chaldeans it found around the furnace. But the angel of the Lord came down into the oven, together with Azariah and his peers, and drove the flame of the fire out of the oven, and made the middle of the furnace like a moist whistling wind, so that the fire did not touch them at all and neither hurt nor troubled them. Then the three, as out of one mouth, praised, glorified, and blessed God in the furnace, saying:

Blessed are you, O Lord God of our fathers; and praised and exalted above all forever. And blessed is your glorious and holy name; and praised and exalted above all forever. Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory; and praised and glorified above all forever. Blessed are you on the glorious throne of your kingdom; and praised and glorified above all forever. Blessed are you, who beholds the abyss while sitting upon the cherubim; and praised and exalted above all forever. Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven; and above all praised and glorified forever. All works of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Heavens, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All waters above the sky, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All powers of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Sun and moon, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Stars of heaven, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Every shower and dew, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All winds, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Fire and heat, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Winter and summer, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Dews and storms of snow, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Ice and cold, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Frost and snow, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Nights and days, bless the Lord; bless and exalt him above all forever. Light and darkness, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Let the earth bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Mountains and little hills, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All things which grow upon the earth, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Seas and rivers, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Fountains, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Whales and all that moves in the waters, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All fowls of the air, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. All beasts and cattle, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Children of men, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Israel, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Priests of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Servants of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Spirits and souls of the righteous, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Holy and humble men of heart, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever. He has delivered us far from hell, and saved us from the hand of death, and delivered us out of the midst of the furnace and burning flame; even out of the midst of the fire he has delivered us. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious, for his mercy endures forever. All you who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods, praise him and give him thanks, for his mercy endures forever."

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²⁴*Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”* ²⁵*“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”*

- *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished;...”* Nebuchadnezzar viewed the spectacle from a point close enough to see what was happening inside (perhaps there were viewing ports as some suggest) but safe enough away not to be burned. And in just a moment Nebuchadnezzar literally could not believe his eyes and asked for confirmation of what he saw.
- *“Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”* Nebuchadnezzar needed confirmation of what he saw, and what had just happened. He questioned his “counselors” (most likely his entourage always with him) and they confirmed his understanding.
- *“I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”* It is obvious at this point that a miracle is happening. Note there are several amazing things happening here:
 - They are loose, not bound
 - They are alive and walking around, not even hurt
 - There is a fourth man among them, whose has the form like “the Son of God” (beyond human)



Who, exactly is this fourth man? Nebuchadnezzar’s astonishment at counting four living and unharmed figures in the furnace was heightened by the remarkable appearance of the stranger Nebuchadnezzar described as “like a son of the gods.” This king is not familiar yet with the Ancient of Days, or His Son, but he obviously recognized that this being was not fully human, or at least MORE than human, in the “divine” category. The ancient Chaldean here would read “like a son of god” – it is our translations that add the caps on Son and God, to indicate the only begotten son of the Most High God. The Holy Spirit’s influence is also at work here. This description is not accidental or coincidental.

The question now is, was this an angel, or truly the Son of God? Is this Jesus? The actual words used are BAR ELAHIN, which is Aramaic for the Hebrew bar Elohim – son of God. *Elohim* is the word used for God throughout the Old Testament. We know that “*im*” is a plural ending, however, so this word implies more than one God, but that is the mysterious beauty of it! Throughout scripture, wherever this word is used, it breaks all Hebrew grammatical rules. It is a plural word, but is used in a singular tense. This is just one more indication of the remarkable presence of the Holy Spirit in our scriptures, and accuracy of God’s being in three persons.

The Jews faithfully recite the Shema, which is Israel’s eloquent statement about their God. *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!”* (Deuteronomy 6:4) Our God is ONE God, yet He is three in one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Elohim is the word for God in the very first verse of the Bible – *“Bereshith bara Elohim...”* IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED....For this reason, many who have an understanding of this unique use of the word believe that these words in Daniel chapter 3 indicate that this fourth person was indeed Jesus, the Son of God.

And since we are already referencing Genesis 1:1, let's take a **brief but fascinating side trip here**. In the original Hebrew text for this verse there are two letters hanging after the word **Elohim**. They don't seem to belong anywhere. These letters are the Hebrew **aleph** and **tau** (or *tav*). The *aleph* is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The *tau* is the last letter. In English, this is our "a" and "z." In the Greek, these are ALPHA and OMEGA. Sound familiar?? These also appear in other places in scripture (including Zechariah 12:10), a wonderful reminder of just who Jesus is. In Revelation He says he is the **Alpha and the Omega**, the first and the last. In Genesis, we are told that Elohim is the *aleph* (*alpha*, Greek) and the tau (*omega*), the first and the last. This is a tribute to the mysterious triune nature of God, which is consistent and wonderfully presented throughout scripture.



26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.

- ***"Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace..."*** The king is so amazed he comes as close to the mouth of the hot furnace as he can, calling for the three men he had thrown in there. He had seen his "mighty men of valor" die in this very place, but he is so completely amazed he risks himself to come down and see, and call to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.



- ***"...servants of the Most High God ..."*** When the king called the faithful Hebrew men to come out of the furnace he called them **servants of the Most High God**. They were most definitely His servants, loyal and trusting in extreme circumstances. There is nothing higher in God's service than to be a humble servant (Mk 10:44–45). The king still did not exercise personal trust in the God whose power had been demonstrated, however, at least not on this occasion. He will in the next chapter, but only after another extreme experience. God goes to great lengths to influence Nebuchadnezzar's heart.
- ***"...the Most High God ..."*** This is **El Elyon** in Hebrew, a common name for God in the Old Testament. Nebuchadnezzar meant this in the most literal sense. The God of these three Jewish men was indeed a God higher than any other. To be able to preserve his servants through the fiery furnace is something even this proud king knew was not possible for any other god.

27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

- **A complete miracle**, not just deliverance—not even a hair had been singed and not even the smell of smoke was upon their clothes. Details such as these speak of the testimony of actual eyewitnesses. All those administrators who were called together to worship the king's image actually witnessed the awesome power of the Most High God. Can you imagine the hubbub around these three men?

- Through this *Christophany* (a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ), the Lord Himself joined the three Jewish men in the furnace. His presence protected them so that their clothing was not even burned, and the smell of smoke was undetectable on the men. Nebuchadnezzar recognized the obvious and concluded that no god he had known would be able to accomplish such a feat.
- Their bindings were gone, yet there was absolutely no other indication of their being in that furnace. Sort of defeats the “cold spot” theory! This would have had to be a very selective fire...

²⁸*Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!”*

- *“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego...”* Nebuchadnezzar is not pledging his allegiance to this God, but is indeed recognizing that their God is Omnipotent, all powerful, and is therefore superior to any other god he has known. In the next chapter Nebuchadnezzar has a life-changing experience with this God of Gods, and will admit there are no other gods before Him.
- *“...who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him...”* Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges what this great God has done. He saw the “fourth man,” and recognized Him as a divine messenger. Little does he know that this “angel” is the only uncreated Angel, the Angel – or messenger – of the Lord, Jesus Himself. He also acknowledged the trust of these young men and is impressed with their commitment and courage.
- *“...they have frustrated the king’s word,...”* Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael may be the only humans who ever defied the king’s order and lived. No one else could “frustrate the king’s word.” The word used here actually means “to change, or alter.” No other human being could stand up to the king and make him change his word. This is the precursor to the famous “law of the Medes and Persians” (something common in the ancient world), which indicated that if a king issued his word, it could not be retracted. We will see this come into play in chapter 6. It is also key in the book of Esther.
- *“...and yielded their bodies ...”* Nebuchadnezzar knew precisely what these men had done. They were faithful to their God, even if it meant what appeared to be certain death. This is “yielding of their bodies.” But they had yielded their hearts well before this time. If all believers were as willing to “yield their bodies” (and their hearts) to God imagine what could be accomplished in His Name! Even the commandments of kings could be “frustrated!”

- Just as God delivered and kept these Jewish followers of Yahweh, our Lord **Jesus is also more than able to keep His own** (us) in the world today. That ought to comfort and encourage us.

--He said in John 10:27–28: *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”*

--And again in John 17:11, and 15: *“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”*

--In Hebrews 7:25 we read: *“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*



²⁹*“Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”*

- Obviously Nebuchadnezzar has a new found respect for the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Although he is not yet completely given over to Yahweh, or is he willing to acknowledge Him as the ONLY God, he is impressed and perhaps a bit fearful of angering this God. He threatens anyone who speaks against the God of Israel with their lives and their homes. This is a typical sentence in the ancient world at that time. Those not in favor with the king risked being cut in pieces and their homes burned down. That would be motivator enough not to blaspheme this powerful God!
- *“...there is no other God who can deliver like this.”* Nebuchadnezzar saw with his own eyes what Yahweh could do. He is willing to acknowledge that He is more powerful than any other god, but not yet ready to say and believe He is the ONLY God.

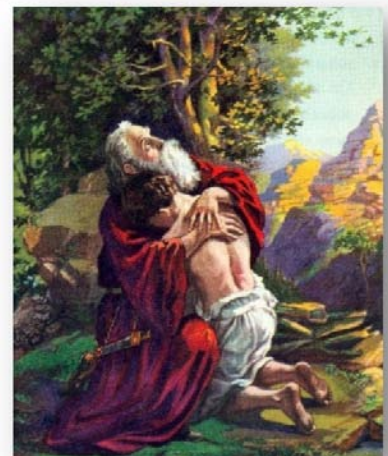
³⁰*Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.*

- Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael are **once again back in favor with the king**. Twice they have been sentenced to death, twice they have been miraculously delivered, and twice they have been promoted.
- God blessed the Jews in captivity this day by providing Hebrews to rule over them on a daily basis, just as He did when Daniel was promoted to such a high position in the kingdom of Babylon. Even though the Jews are in captivity because of their disobedience, and God’s promised discipline, He is still merciful to them and is still protecting them.

NOW LET’S ADDRESS THE BIG QUESTION IN THIS CHAPTER: WHERE WAS DANIEL??

The fact that Daniel is not mentioned may be explained in a couple of ways: he may have been busy elsewhere with administrative affairs, or, as a higher official, may not have been required to attend the meeting. The fact is, we don’t know where he was. However, this brings up the natural question about where he was, and why he is not mentioned in this event. When we look at scripture, we must not only look at what IS there, but what is NOT there. Many believe the absence of Daniel is very deliberate. **God’s Word is always deliberate.**

Let’s use a well-known story as an example of the significance of something missing in scripture. In Genesis 22, we have the incredible story of Abraham and Isaac going up Mount Moriah to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh. Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, but just in time God provided a ram for the sacrifice. Abraham knew this was a prophetic event, as we can see in his naming of the place – *“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah (Yahweh)-jireh (God will be seen, or God will see to it..some have translated this to “God will provide”): as it is said to this day, in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.”* What shall be seen? Another Father sacrificing His Son – the provided sacrifice for all mankind. God did indeed “see to it.”



We know this story, but what is missing here is the fact that the name of Isaac, the type for Jesus, is not seen from this moment on Mt. Moriah (even not in their descent, though we know he was there, his name is not mentioned) until the unnamed servant (always an indication and symbolic for the Holy Spirit who will not speak His own name, but only that of Jesus) goes and gets a bride for Isaac. All this time, it's as if the Holy Spirit has edited out the name of Isaac in the narrative.

Who is Isaac a type for? Jesus. Who is Abraham a type for? The Father. Who is the unnamed servant a type for? The Holy Spirit. So, from this interesting narrative, running with the types, Jesus is not present until the Holy Spirit retrieves His bride. This is amazing! Many other passages in scripture give us the same kinds of indications, such as no mention of the Church from Revelation 4 until chapter 19 when she returns with her Husband. This conspicuous absence or lack of mention is deliberate as well. We could go on and on with this, but we need to **get back to the point. Why is Daniel not mentioned in this chapter?**

This entire chapter of Daniel 3 is thought by many to be an interesting parallel and type to the tribulation in Revelation. Some scripture references: Revelation 13:11-18 (actually the entire book!) and Matthew 24:15. Here are some things to consider about this interesting chapter, beyond the obvious courage and dedication to God by the three young Jewish men. This is speculation, but it would be a very sound concept.

- **Nebuchadnezzar is a type for the Antichrist.** The reason for the image is an attempt at one world religion – a repeat of the Tower of Babel. (Revelation 17). Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael may represent Israel during the Tribulation (Revelation 7, and 15:2) The fiery furnace is the tribulation itself.
- There are many references in scripture to fire, which indicates many things: God's presence (Ex 3:1-4), pathways (Ex. 13:21), precepts (Exodus 19:16-18), punishment (Gen. 19:23-24, Lev. 10:2), power (1 Kings 18:24), protection (Daniel 3:25), even prophecy (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 17:29-30, and presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). It is also a symbol for trials and tribulation.
- **COMMENTARY: This historical incident seems to have prophetic significance as well. In the coming Tribulation a Gentile ruler (Daniel 7:8) will demand for himself the worship that belongs to God (2Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:8). Any who refuse to acknowledge his right to receive worship will be killed (Revelation 13:15). Assuming political and religious power, he will oppress Israel (Revelation 13:7). Most of the people in the world, including many in Israel, will submit to and worship him. But a small remnant in Israel, like the three in Daniel's day, will refuse. Many who will not worship the Antichrist will be severely punished; some will be martyred for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. But a few will be delivered from those persecutions by the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming.**
- **In the forthcoming Tribulation period God will do for this believing remnant what He did for Daniel's three companions. They withstood the decree of the king, and though they were not exempted from suffering and oppression they were delivered out of it by the God they trusted. No doubt the remnant of believing Jews in that coming day will find great comfort, consolation, and instruction from this incident in the lives of Daniel's three companions, as those in Daniel's day must have found as they were living under Gentile rule.** (Walvoord and Zuck)
- **Another interesting note: Daniel is called the "beloved" prophet in the Old Testament.** Who was the one called "the beloved" in the New Testament? John, the writer of the book of Revelation. Both wrote the only apocalyptic books in the Bible. Both lived to be very old. Both prophets are considered representative of the Church.

- **So again, where was Daniel? Missing. Where is the Church in Revelation 4 through 18? Missing.** What do these absences tell us, the Church? Perhaps it is that during this time of tribulation the Church is indeed missing – at least on earth. But we are not missing in heaven, because we will have been removed prior to that time and reunited with our Husband. God’s Word is truly amazing.
- **COMMENTARY: The events recorded here in this chapter are a historical incident, but we should also note that it is an adumbration, a prophetic picture, of the Great Tribulation period. The fiery furnace represents the suffering that will occur during the Great Tribulation. This man Nebuchadnezzar represents the beast out of the sea, the Antichrist, the last great world ruler. This image of gold represents the abomination of desolation of which the Lord Jesus spoke. These three Hebrew children represent the remnant which will be miraculously preserved during the Great Tribulation period. And then, quite interestingly, Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter at all. He wasn’t around. Apparently he acted not only as a Supreme Court Justice, but also as prime minister of the kingdom. He was out on kingdom business, out on the king’s highway somewhere. He is therefore, a picture of the redeemed ones who are to be removed before the Great Tribulation. What a very wonderful picture is presented here! In the fourth Man present in the furnace, we see that the Lord Jesus was there with them. He is with you and me today as we go through our trials. He said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). He also said, “... lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). He promises never to leave or forsake His own. (McGee)**
- We emphasize that this is all speculation, but is arrived at through careful analysis of the Word, patterns, types, and what is there and not there. The Holy Spirit wants us to draw certain conclusions when we find these interesting passages.
- **God’s Word is like a field full of treasures,** but they are just below the surface most times. It’s up to us to dig, and to ask for His guidance. The richness of all His Word is available if we really want to experience it. In this chapter of Daniel we have seen:
 - Man’s pride opens a gulf between him and God, and will be the ultimate fall and destruction of any man or woman
 - Role models for true commitment to God, and not loving our lives so much that we are not willing to give them up for Him (“*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*” Revelation 12:11) These young men were delivered just as many will be delivered during the Tribulation period. Their testimony will be powerful, just as it was here.
 - A Gentile king impressed by such dedication, so much so that his commands were reversed. A challenge for us to have the same courage to change the world.
 - God is able and willing to deliver His people through trials, even in miraculous ways. He has done so over and over throughout history and continues. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.
 - God will honor those who honor Him.
 - A story that might suggest the absence of the Church on earth during the Tribulation (just one of many scripture passages that point to this.)
 - An event that may foreshadow the fiery tribulation period (“Time of Jacob’s Trouble”) for Jews and all believers, but God will be present then as well

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE.

God’s Word is a never ending refreshing well of joy and treasure. **Dig and drink!!**

