

## The Book of Daniel

### Faith in the Face of the Furnace

#### Daniel 3

#### 1. **The Image and the Assembly** (vs.1-3)

Though it is impossible to say exactly in what year this took place, if there is to be any chronological consistency to Daniel's book, it likely took place in the early years of Nebuchadnezzar's long reign because there had to be sufficient time near the end of his reign (562 BC) for him to be as a wild beast for seven years (Dan 4:32) which is then followed by a time where he was restored to power and his greatness was increased (Dan 4:36). The image itself was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and was most likely a wooden structure that was overlaid with gold. Nebuchadnezzar ordered all of the governing officials from throughout the newly consolidated empire to gather together for the dedication of this image.

#### 2. **The Command and the Consequences** (vs.4-6)

At the dedication of the image, all of the officials were commanded fall prostrate before the image and worship it. Failure to comply would result in a public execution. This method of execution was not unique, Nebuchadnezzar had done this on other occasions (Jer 29:22).

#### 3. **The Conformity and the Conflict** (vs.7-12)

With the playing of music by the imperial musicians nearly every single individual who had gathered before the image dropped to the ground as instructed. The three Jewish friends, high officials over the province of Babylon, were the only ones to refuse. This violation was immediately brought to the attention of the king by those who were likely envious of the three.

#### 4. **Nebuchadnezzar's Rage, Patience, and Pride** (vs.13-15)

It is easy to understand the severity of Nebuchadnezzar's response to the news when the three hand picked and highest officials of the capital province are the only ones to rebel in a public affair of this size. In his anger he displays great pride in directly challenging a god who has been displayed as powerful before him (cf. Dan 2:47).

#### 5. **The Confident Faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego** (vs.16-18)

The three address the king and the charges against them plainly. They succinctly state their absolute confidence in God's ability to save them from the king along with the fact that they do not know whether or not He will choose to do so (cf. Job 13:15).

#### 6. **Nebuchadnezzar's Wrath and Verdict** (vs.19-23)

Very likely no one had ever dared to speak in this way to the king, and his rage was so great that his face was contorted. In his rage he ordered the furnace to be made much hotter and for the men to be bound in their clothes and thrown into the furnace.

#### 7. **God's Deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego** (vs.24-27)

To the amazement of (Gen 18:1; Ex 13:21) of all who were witnesses, four men were walking in the midst of the flames, and when the three friends came out, they bore no evidence of having been near the furnace.

#### 8. **Nebuchadnezzar's Response to God's Deliverance** (vs.28-30)

The king responds to all of these events by publicly magnifying God in the empire and in causing the three friends to prosper. It is possible that part of the reason for such a response was that the king feared the reprisal of a God who could deliver these men from his hand (cf. v.15).