

doing is actually being construed as political rebellion, defiance of the king's order. You are not going to be executed for religion but for civil disobedience. So what good does persisting in this rebellious state do? The proper course is to bow down, live, and extend your 'godly' influence in other ways'" (Boice 2003: 44-45).

v15 "Here the king asserts his own power above all gods, and we can imagine the God of Psalm 2 raising his eyebrows and emitting a slight chuckle" (Longman 1999: 100).

v17 "The Hebrews were not prepared to tell God what their fate should be. If He should grant their deliverance, all was well. If not, God's wisdom was still best (Job 13:15). Their part was to obey God and leave the consequences to Him" (Feinberg 1981: 46).

v25 "This is a common expression in Semitic languages for a supernatural being. A polytheist like Nebuchadnezzar would use it for a member of the pantheon of gods" (Lucas 2009: 538).

v25 "In one sense, it does not make any difference. Even if the fourth figure was an angel, it was God's angel; God is still the redeemer. Even Nebuchadnezzar recognizes this. He further acknowledges that the three have been right to obey this God rather than a king like him" (Longman 1999: 103).

"It is worth noting that they had to endure the ordeal of being thrown into the fire, but nevertheless their lives were spared. There is no suggestion here or elsewhere in Scripture that the believer will be cushioned against trouble and suffering except by the presence of the Lord with him in it (Isa. 43:2; John 12:26)" (Baldwin 1978: 112).

"If Yahweh could deliver the Hebrews from the furnace, he can see saints of any age through their fiery trials" (Miller 1994: 126).

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DANIEL 3: THE LORD'S PROTECTION OF THE FAITHFUL

THE MESSAGE OF DANIEL 3

The Lord protects faithful exiles who worship him only.

OUTLINE OF DANIEL 3

- I. Nebuchadnezzar constructs an image and commands all peoples to worship it (3:1-7).
- II. The Babylonians accuse Daniel's friends of defying Nebuchadnezzar's order (3:8-12).
- III. Daniel's friends are threatened with death if they do not bow down (3:13-15).
- IV. Daniel's friends explain their refusal to worship an idol (3:16-18)
- V. Nebuchadnezzar throws Daniel's friends into the furnace (3:19-23).
- VI. The Lord delivers Daniel's friends from the furnace (3:24-27).
- VII. Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel's friends and praises their God (3:28-30).

ALTERNATE OUTLINE OF DANIEL 3

Idol built (3:1-7)
Jews attacked (3:8-12)
Jews threatened (3:13-15)
Jews defend their faith (3:16-18)
Jews punished (3:19-23)
Jews delivered (3:24-27)
God praised (3:28-30)

THE PURPOSE OF DANIEL 3

In his response to the deliverance, Nebuchadnezzar explicitly provides all exiles with instructions and hope (3:28-29).

1. He recognizes that they were delivered by God and not as the result of accident or coincidence.
2. He commends the three exiles for trusting in God and defying his own command, even to the point of death.
3. He states the necessity of worshiping the true God alone.

4. His decree of promotion for the faithful and destruction for those opposed to God foreshadows the ultimate destiny of all men.

Thus this historical event offers encouragement to saints in the future who will face arrogant rulers who set themselves up against the Lord.

PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF CHAPTER 3

It prepares the Jewish people for suffering while living in exile. They will be hated by their peers and persecuted by the leaders.

It shows the ultimate destiny of those who trust the Lord.

It portends the fate of those who would resist worship of the true God.

It foreshadows the future ruler who will demand worship of himself and will kill those who refuse (Dan 7:15; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:8, 15). While many will submit, a remnant will resist and be protected.

PARALLELS BETWEEN DANIEL 3 AND 6

1. In both stories, faithful Jews suffer because of jealous pagan rivals.
2. In both stories, the lives of faithful Judeans are severely threatened by virtue of their obedience to God's Word.
3. In both stories, the king seeks allegiance rightly due to the Lord only.
4. In both stories, the Lord delivers the Judeans by means of a spectacular and public miracle.
5. In both stories, a pagan king publicly declares the faithfulness of the God of Israel.

CONNECTIONS TO SCRIPTURE

Bowing down to a statue in Babylon recalls mankind's early rebellion against God by building a tower in Babel (Gen 10).

Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to unite all peoples, nations, and languages in worship of a single (false) god is an attempt to reverse God's judgment upon man at Babel. This effort will continue in the future and ultimately be destroyed when Jesus returns (Rev 17-18).

Nebuchadnezzar's exalting himself as supreme foreshadows the horns who would establish themselves against the Lord (Dan 7, 8, 9, 11; Isa 14).

Isaiah prepared his people for exile in Babylon by describing the impotence of idols (Isa 40-48). He also declared the Lord's ability to preserve his people in the midst of great danger, even specifying that "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isa 43:2).

The writer of Hebrews refers to the faith of those who "quenched the fury of the flames" (Heb 11:34).

NOTES

"The real 'contest' in the story is not between the Jews and the king, or between the Jews and the Chaldeans. It is between Nebuchadnezzar and the God of Israel, who does not appear in the story as a character" (Lucas 2002: 87).

"Five times in vv. 1-12 it is stated that the image was set up by Nebuchadnezzar. This emphasizes the way in which religion and the State get intertwined. Refusal to worship the image cannot be tolerated because it subverts the authority of the State" (Lucas 2002: 95).

v1 "He defied God and said in effect, "I will not allow the God of Daniel to set my kingdom aside. My rule will endure"" (Boice 2003: 42).

v6 "Jeremiah 29:22 also records that Nebuchadnezzar burned to death two men named Zedekiah and Ahab" (Miller 1994: 115).

v12 "What if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had listened to our kinds of rationalizations? Someone might have said, "The three of you are obviously sincere and quite dedicated. We need more people like you, and that is just the reason why you must listen to reason in this matter. Because if you do not listen and instead persist in this obstinate disobedience, you are going to be killed and your beneficial influence on Babylon will be over. Consider first that your disobedience is already being entirely misunderstood. You think that you are standing for the identity of the true God. But what you are