

To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas June 11, 2017

Spiritual Bravery and Spiritual Cowardice *“We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.”*

Part 2

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.



You will recall that Elder Sam preached a sermon a few months back on the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream in Daniel 2. Daniel 2:32 *This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.* This is the picture that Sam included in his sermon.

In Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar now builds a great image that he demands that everyone in his vast kingdom fall down and worship. As we talk about Daniel 3 there is no explanation as to the time between Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and Daniel 3:1 when the image of gold is made. The Septuagint says this was done in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year of his reign, but the exact passage of time is not known. If this is true, the difference between Daniel 2 and 3 is 14 years. It is an important point because this has an effect on how old the 3 Hebrew children

were when this occurred.



The expositors do not agree if the statue was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, of his father or one of his god's, like Bel. Whatever the statue was of, it is clear that Nebuchadnezzar seemed to take it personally that the 3 Hebrew children would not fall down and worship it.

There are some reasons to conclude it was the image in his dream and that it was Nebuchadnezzar himself. In Chapter 2 Daniel already told him that the head of the image was him (Nebuchadnezzar). Daniel 3:28 - *Thou art this head of gold.* Nebuchadnezzar is certainly vain and conceited enough that it could be a representation of himself. This is evidenced in Daniel 4:30 *The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* But it is not clear. What is clear is that whatever it was it was meant to be an item of religious worship. Barnes concludes that it was an image of bel.

The expositors say that it could be the image he saw in his dream except the whole thing is made of gold, and not the other metal and substances because of his vanity. That is, that it was gold to contradict the interpretation of his dream, and avert the fate of his empire signified by it. The expositors suspect that the image was not pure gold but rather gold plated over wood or it was gold on the outside and hollow on the inside. They say it could not be pure gold because that would have been too much gold for even Nebuchadnezzar to amass. I do not assume they are right on that point. He had access



to a lot of gold of the countries he pillaged. I do agree that it is possible that the statue was not of pure gold. The reason is that gold is heavy, but it is soft. It would be difficult for a gold image of this magnitude to sustain itself upright. For example, the Greeks were geniuses at making marble statues and the like that were free standing (it was difficult to do actually). The Romans not so much, you will see many Roman statues where the statue is leaning on something like a boy or a tree or there is a rod coming out of the figures backside. In the picture to the left both are present.

Whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits. A common cubit is a half a yard (see example at the pulpit). So, using that measurement the image was thirty yards high or about 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. This throws the expositors off because if it is a statue of a man, then the proportions are off. This would make the height 10 times the breadth. If a man is 2 feet across at the shoulders roughly, this would make him 20' tall using these measurements. A more typical proportion for a man is 3 times (2 feet across at the shoulders and 6 feet tall). Jamison Faucett and Brown say that the breadth was not side to side but front to back (the back to the breast) and that would be a proper measure in line with a man.

Why was the statue so large? The vast proportion of the statue, or idol, was to show his greatness by the height and bulk of it, and his pride and magnificence in the richness of it, seeing it was of gold, and to be a monument to posterity of his famous exploits. When Nebuchadnezzar is addressed he is often addressed "O king live forever." If the statue was of himself it would be a way to continue his legacy long after he was physically dead.



Attached is a photo of the “Christ the Redeemer” idol in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The statue is 98 feet tall, not including its 26 ft pedestal, and its arms stretch 92 feet wide. This is about as close as I could find to what Nebuchadnezzar had built. The idolatrous nature of man is truly breathtaking. We will make an idol out of anything and everything.

He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon

It appears Nebuchadnezzar set up this monstrosity in an open plain near Babylon so it might be seen of all, and there might be room enough for a vast number of worshippers. It also would be more impressive looking if it was towering over the people with nothing else to scale it to like a temple or other buildings. If you have ever gone to the Statue of Liberty and look up, it is massive and it sits out on an island in the middle of water – it is impressive.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Messengers are dispatched to all parts of Nebuchadnezzar’s vast kingdom to gather together all the rulers, government officials, dukes, lords, judges, princes, captains (military officers) to dedicate this filthy image. The king issued a subpoena, or summons to all of these people that they must appear. The king does not take “NO” for an answer. You accept this invitation or you die. He is going to make them an offer they can’t refuse.

Who in their right mind is going to refuse this invitation? This is a big deal. When you consider how many people might have been there given the invitation, it was probably a fairly large number and a lot of expense was incurred to get all of the nobles and leaders in the kingdom to the ceremony. If you estimate that the size of the army was 500,000 strong (about the size of the Roman army) you would have thousands and possibly tens of thousands of military commanders. In the Marine Corps, a platoon is 43 soldiers and they are led by a platoon commander, a second lieutenant, platoon sergeant, and a staff sergeant. That's 4 leaders for every roughly 50 men.

My speculation is that given the size of the kingdom and with the vast invitation list, they may have had 50,000 to 100,000 people minimum at the dedication ceremony or more. Certainly if you invite the upper crust of society it follows some regular folk would have attended as well. Everybody that was "anybody" would have been there. This was the event of the year for the Babylonian kingdom. Consider also that he is demanding that public servants participate. Here are some current facts on the topic: there are 1.4 million federal civilian employees in this country, 2.7 million if you count everyone on the federal payroll (including military). That makes the federal government the largest employer in the U.S. by far. Walmart is second at 1.5 million in the U.S. There are 22 million public servants in this country (federal, state and local), compared to just 13 million in manufacturing. Thus, it is possible that the 50 to 100,000 number is understated.

3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The language is clear that on a particular day all of these people actually stood in the plain of Dura before this image to admire it, dedicate it and fall down and worship it. This is going to be a spectacle of drama, pomp and ceremony. You should think presidential inauguration. The speculation among several of the expositors is that this was a setup by envious rulers in the government to "out" these three Jews (who now were in the king's favor) to get rid of them, like what happened with Daniel and the lion's den. Remember, they would have been "walking picket signs" and been notoriously not Babylonian. It would be like three Russians being President Trump's advisors, right hand men or in his cabinet. They were the Babylonians' enemy.

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

Now, to add to the drama and spectacle of the event, we add some theatrics. We have the herald or announcer or public crier make a proclamation in multiple languages, that when you hear this special music you are to immediately fall down and worship this monstrosity. Think of Michael Buffer the ring announcer for professional boxing that says “Let’s Get Ready to Rumble.” It was done to get the attention of the people and to cause an in terrorem affect (intended to threaten or intimidate – particularly due to the unique nature of the prescribed death). Also, notice that he said “To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages.” This is not just a Babylonian event. This shows that there were many people throughout the Babylonian empire invited to this event. This would have included Armenians, Parthians, Medes, Persians, and Jews among others. Jamieson Fausset and Brown says: *The arguments of the persecutor are in brief, Turn or burn.* Also, adding to the spectacle is that everyone must do this in unison, like at a football game when the announcer says the U.S. national anthem will be sung and everyone must stand up and put their hand on their heart or all hades is going to break loose – (ala Colin Kaepernick).

Matthew Henry says: *Here were the charms of music to allure them into a compliance and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptation, they all yielded. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind-instruments and hand-instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer (see last page), the melody of which they thought was ravishing (and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion), and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image.*

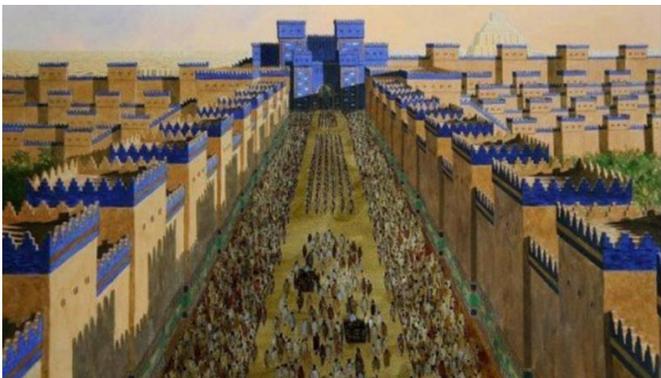
6 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.



If you refuse to worship this idol or neglect to worship it then you are immediately (“hour” – per Strongs: *brief time or moment*) to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Gill says the fiery furnace was most likely to make stones (or brick), so it was most likely a brick kiln. The Babylonians were prolific when it came to building. Sam told you about the huge brick walls that they could have chariot races on. They were most likely experts in making millions of bricks and had the equivalent of factories to churn them out. These large kilns certainly would have been large enough to hold 4 people or more. This was a common form of execution among the Chaldeans (see Jer. 29:22), and would have been particularly feared. Burning to death is a painful way to die and is quite cruel. This is a reminder of the cruelty of the



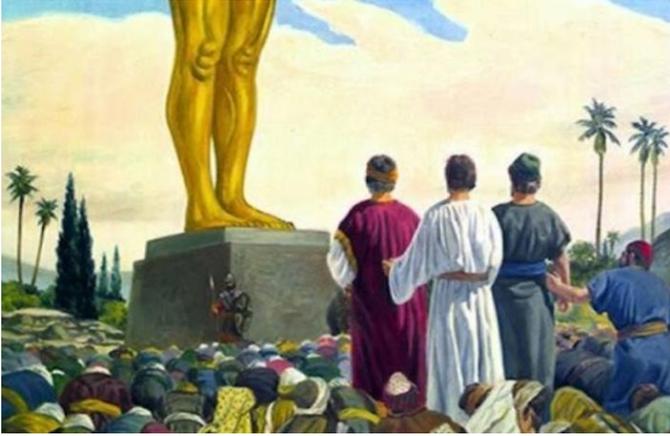
Nazi’s that burned the Jews and others in ovens.



8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever... 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

There were Chaldeans that envied these three men because of their wise and loyal counsel (that God blessed them with). They also knew that these three Jews notoriously worshipped and feared the one and only True God and not bel, nebo, merodach, and other of their gods. The expositors say it is likely that Daniel was too far up and close to the king for him to be accused, or because he was in a distant part of the realm, so they decided to charge these three instead. And think about it, if they accuse Daniel and the plot fails, the accusers might be put in the furnace. So, accusing these three is a safer proposition. Also, Matthew Henry says that the word “Chaldeans” here refers to them being magicians and astrologers who would harbor bad feelings toward the Jews over the dream issues from Chapter 2 and because they had been eclipsed and demoted and Daniel and these three promoted. They might as well have said “See you put these slave Jews over the affairs of Babylon and look at what they do, they have no allegiance to you King or Babylon and they do not serve our gods! Burn them!”

Matthew Henry: *Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence, for them to disobey the king’s command, when they had shared so much of the king’s favour. And, besides, the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous; it would be a bad example, and have a bad influence upon others; and therefore it was necessary that it should be severely animadverted upon. (For you young people, and for that matter, all of you people, animaverted means to comment upon unfavorably or critically. If you weren’t living in the 15th century, you are just out in the cold on that word.)* (23)



The manner of the worship is such that there is no way to “blend in,” because it is clear that when everyone else is on their hands and knees and you have three men standing, there is no hiding from that. As previously stated a number of expositors believe this was a specific plot to out these three and have them removed.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

So, Nebuchadnezzar is infuriated at the report that these three young men who he has treated well have denied him and refused to bow down. But instead of slaying them outright he decides to examine them, so he may have had some respect for them. This is a man of great violence and cruelty – remember he had Zedkiah’s children killed in front of him and then burned his eyes so that was the last thing he saw. In addition, you would think that this is something that was rarely done – where the King is openly denied and embarrassed – because the penalty of such is typically death on the spot. So the King is absolutely outraged. Just think, if the king can be openly denied, he could lose his rule of power and his ability to govern. But, he calms down some and asks them *“Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, [I can’t hardly believe this] do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready ... [to] fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”* Seemingly, he is willing to forgive their transgression if they will just bow down now. He is full of pride and blasphemy – *and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?* He as much says: there is no god, I am the only god you need to worry about, fall down and worship me! Like when Satan said to Christ to worship him.

Luke 4:6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt

worship me, all shall be thine. 8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings, #Da 2:47.

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

These young men displayed great patience and piety in the heat of battle with their very lives on the line. They were not intimidated by the King in the least. They did not fear for their lives. They viewed this from a spiritual perspective and not a fleshly one. They knew that God Almighty had jurisdiction in the plain of Dura. Mat 10:28 *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* This exchange probably took place in open court in front of a number of people or in front of the statue itself. Nebuchadnezzar cannot afford for this to go wrong – so he is going to make an example of them if they deny his will. These three young men displayed great maturity and answered him in a composed and mild manner but they did not flatter him in any way or show the least bit of fear or apprehension. They said we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. This is so plain and clear we do not even have to think about this matter, we are not going to do this thing. We are not going to worship you or that filthy idol of yours! Period! We are never going to do this thing, no matter what you do to us. We will not deny our God. We serve God Almighty and he is a Jealous God and is a Consuming Fire. We fear him, not you. We serve the God in heaven that made everything and He can deliver us if He chooses – we will not be intimidated by you or fear your temporal power. We are very comfortable placing this in God's hand and letting his sovereignty determine the outcome. Their love, confidence and faith in God is unwavering! They are not going to be pushed around by anyone. They are neither ashamed nor fearful to deny their religion and drawback from God at this critical time. This is Medal of Honor time! It may be that the Lord will work for us! Cowards need not apply for this kind of service. They were also not thinking

about their careers or any self-will of their own. The expositors say that in Hebrews 11 the language there specifically references these three young men.

Heb 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire...

It's one thing to profess your religion when there is no danger about, when the sky is blue, rays of sunshine are basking on your face with no cloud in the sky and a completely differently thing when the thunder and lightning of man's anger and government power is breathing down your neck and will only be satisfied with your death or destruction.

Few of these hypocrites claiming to be "Christians" and true followers of Christ have endured such situations. When the power of the State of Nebraska hangs over your head for three years – just plead guilty and deny your God – it's easy. No we are not going to do that. In Snyder they said "We will settle this case that will bankrupt you if you just agree to stop picketing the deaths of soldier funerals. That is all we are asking for. You stop doing that and we will drop the case." No! We are not going to deny our God! He can deliver us out of your hand in an amazing fashion if we have the courage and faith to withstand the wind and rage of your short-lived anger. Ps 76:10 *"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* We have seen first-hand, over and over, how the Lord our God delivers His people from the rage of angry sinners. It is always and only, Christ in you, the hope of glory! God gets His glory working in His people so that they stand still and wait for His deliverance. This flesh does not like to be told they have sin. It is sometimes painful to watch the furious rage when it spills out, in the providence of God. Pr 22:24 *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:* Pr 29:22 *An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.* The arm of God is not shortened by furious men.

19 ¶ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

The King, being treated so forthrightly by these unwavering young men is now foaming at the mouth mad. His visage (nose and eyes) changed right before their eyes. There was steam coming out of the top of his head. That is mad! And just to be sure that they don't get out of this somehow, we are going to put 7 times the normal amount of fuel in the

fire so it is roaring hot. It is going to be 7 times hotter than we have ever had it. Seven times more than it was wont — literally, "than it was (ever) seen to be heated." We have never heated this furnace this hot before. A modern brick kiln gets to between 1,800 and 2,000 degrees. It is going to be so hot, those three young men are going to be dead as soon as they hit the furnace. A crematorium for example gets to between 1,100 and 1,500 degrees. They reduce the body to complete ash, even bones. So you may be approaching twice the temperature in a crematorium. Without the hand of God, they are going to last about 2 seconds in that furnace, if even that, and their blood and organs are going to boil and explode. It is going to be like an explosion when they hit the furnace. I was grilling the other day and the temperature in the grill was about 500 degrees and when I would turn the food my arms would literally start to feel like they were burning and cooking it was so hot. Cells in the human body start to break down around 110 degree, but can withstand up to 130 degrees for a while.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

We are going to stack the deck against these three young men. We are going to have the furnace 7 times hotter than normal, we are going to get the strongest soldiers in the army – Arnold Schwarzenegger types, to bind these men, so they can't run from the fire or get away, or even struggle in any way. And we are going to put a lot of clothes on them, winter coats and hats and such so they immediately ignite as soon as possible. And, these mighty men, these soldiers that bound them were themselves immediately slain as they approach the fire to haul them in. How fitting. God did not dispatch the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver them from this death!

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

Gill: Not bound as the three were, when cast in; but quite at liberty in their hands and feet, and separate from one another. As this fiery furnace may be an emblem of the fiery trials and afflictive dispensations the children of God pass through in this world, being not joyous, but grievous to the flesh, though useful to purge and purify; so this and some other circumstances attending these good men in the furnace are applicable to the saints in such cases; for though afflictions are sometimes themselves called cords, with which men are said to be bound, yet by means of them they are loosed from other things from the power and prevalence of sin over them; from the world, and the things of it, they sometimes too much cleave and are glued unto; from a spirit of bondage, and from doubts and fears; their hearts under them being comforted and enlarged with the love of God; he knowing, visiting, and choosing them in the furnace of affliction; or making known himself to them, his love and choice of them; whereby their souls are set at liberty, and the graces of his Spirit are drawn forth into a lively exercise, through his love being shed abroad in them.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. 28 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

I love you all. Amen.



Cornet (Trumpet)



Flute



Harp



Sackbut (Trombone) or an ancient string instrument



Psaltery (harp like instrument) (violin)



Dulcimer (guitar)