

DANIEL 3



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Daniel 3

Daniel 3
Copyright 2018 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Cover art: Rembrandt, *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Daniel 3: Introduction

Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream delighted the king no end. So much so, that he got carried away with himself (again) and tried to make the dream a reality by building a statue and commanding everyone in his kingdom to worship it, on pain of death for disobeying.

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would not comply, bringing out the ugliest side of Nebuchadnezzar, as he condemned them to death in the fiery furnace.

But God had other plans, both for His faithful servants, and for King Nebuchadnezzar.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our thrice-weekly devotional newsletter, *Crosfigell*, or our daily *Voices Together* devotional and prayer guide.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

We hope you find this study of Hosea instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Misguided

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar was so pleased with Daniel's interpretation of his dream, that he set about right away to help make that dream come true. Compare his actions in verses 1-7 with what Daniel revealed about the dream. He may have thought he had some kind of divine sanction for doing this, since God had given him the dream and all. But he would soon find out that he'd gone rather too far in his misguided interpretation of what God intended.

Read Psalm 115.

Read Daniel 3.1-7.

Think it Through

1. Let's be generous toward Nebuchadnezzar. Let's suppose he was only trying to put into effect what Daniel had seen in his dream, perhaps as a commemoration of the dream, perhaps even to honor God who gave the dream. Yes, I know, that's being very generous. But where did Nebuchadnezzar go wrong? How can you see that he went *beyond* what God revealed through Daniel (1 Cor. 4.6)?

2. Who was commanded to attend the dedication of this image? Keeping in mind that God is sovereign, and what we know is about to happen, why was it important that all these people, representing all these places and languages, should be there? This gathering of disparate rulers and people reminds us a bit of the situation in Acts 2. Explain.

Meditate

"The enemy prepares the theater, and the king himself collects the spectators and prepares the lists; a theater too, not of chance persons or of some private individuals but of all those who were honorable and in authority, so that their testimony may be worthy of credit with the multitude. They had come summoned for one thing; but they all departed having beheld another thing." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 1 Corinthians 4.6

Lord, You make known Your will through Your Word, and we must cling to that Word, and not go beyond it or add to it. Help me today to...

Pray Psalm 115.1-3.

Psalm 115.1-3 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

2 Ratting Rats

Introduction

The Chaldeans, chafed and vengeful at being shown up by Daniel, are now lying in the bushes for him and his friends. We're not sure where Daniel is in this chapter. Perhaps the Chaldeans considered it would be too obvious to go after him right away, or maybe he was just out of town. At any rate, they seized the opportunity to go after Daniel's friends, and it doesn't look good. But just as in the case of the sons of Haman, a near-contemporary of Daniel, evil designs have a way of blowing up in the faces of those who concoct them.

Read Esther 5.9-6.14.

Read Daniel 3.8-15.

Think it Through

1. In ratting out Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, the Chaldeans were careful with their words. They wanted to create the maximum irritation and outrage. Notice how they quoted Nebuchadnezzar's own words back to him (cf. vv. 10, 11 with vv. 4-6). Why? And just in case Nebuchadnezzar didn't catch the implications of the Jews' behavior, they spelled it out clearly in verse 12. The word *you* is used in verse 12 in ways designed to make the king doubly angry. Explain. What was the risk involved in provoking Nebuchadnezzar like this?

2. The rats seem to have achieved their goal (v. 13). Nebuchadnezzar became furious, and he sent for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to confirm the charge made against them. How can you tell in verse 14 that Nebuchadnezzar has taken this affront personally? Is this what the Chaldeans hoped to achieve? Nebuchadnezzar did not act on heresay alone. He gave Daniel's friends an opportunity to show that there was no substance to the charges against them (v. 15). Look at the last part of verse 15. Compare this with Daniel 2.47. How highly did Nebuchadnezzar think of himself? In the light of what we see in Daniel 3.8-15, how should we regard Nebuchadnezzar's profession in Daniel 2.47? Are Christians today confronted by any situations similar to this one? Explain.

Meditate

"It is not just of old that Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold was set up or only then that he threatened Ananias, Azarias and Misael that he would throw them into the burning fiery furnace unless they worshiped it. Even now Nebuchadnezzar says the same thing to us, the true Hebrews in exile from our homeland. But as for us, let us imitate those holy men so that we may experience the heavenly dew that quenches every fire that arises in us and cools our governing mind." *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

"Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." Luke 12.11, 12

Fill me with Your Spirit for this day, Father, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 115.9-11.

Psalm 115.9-11 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! -
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

3 No Need to Answer

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar undoubtedly knew what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would say in reply to his ultimatum. Like Joshua of old, they had made up their minds in advance of this crisis, and they were not about to change them now, come what may.

Review Joshua 24.1-14.

Read Daniel 3.16-18.

Think it Through

1. Why were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego confident that Nebuchadnezzar did not need an answer from them to his warning in verses 14, 15? What were they saying? They gave him an answer anyway (v. 18), and it was doubtless the one he knew they would give. Would they have been better off just to go along with Nebuchadnezzar's demand, perhaps with their fingers crossed? Explain. What does this say to us about how we ought to be known by the people in our Personal Mission Field?
2. Daniel's friends put their trust in God, regardless of what might happen to them (vv. 17, 18). They understood God to be able to deliver them, whether from the fire or from Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Do you think they might have had two different kinds of *deliverance* in mind? Explain. They knew that God was *able* to deliver them (v.17), but they could not be certain that he *would* (v.18). But their lack of certainty did not keep them from trusting God. What's the lesson here for us?

Meditate

"Look at their faith! We believe, it says, that he is able to save us; but if it should be that our sins prevent him, we still believe in him who will not deliver us. We do not believe in this life but in the future life; nor do we believe in him in order to escape burning here but in order to escape passing from this fire into another fire."
Jerome (347-420 AD)

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end... Hebrews 3.12-14

Father, do not let me fear what people might think of me or do to me; instead, help me to trust in You, and to live before others such that...

Pray Psalm 115.4-11.

Psalm 115.4-11 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Idols made by men's own hand – ever to Your Name be glory –
see nor hear nor understand – ever to Your Name be glory!
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;
All those who serve them fall, but unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! -
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

4 Hot Times

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar was becoming increasingly hot under the collar, and he knew how to make it hot for others. As much as he may have hated to do it, he decided to burn Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace. And he made it seven times hotter than usual. But fiery furnaces were nothing new for faithful Israelites.

Review Deuteronomy 4.15-20.

Read Daniel 3.19-23.

Think it through

1. We note that Nebuchadnezzar heated the fiery furnace “seven times more than it was usually heated.” This furnace must have been a permanent fixture in Nebuchadnezzar’s realm – perhaps like the guillotine in revolutionary France? Or the rack in the Tower of London in 17th century England? It was an instrument of terror. How did Nebuchadnezzar use this furnace? The fiery furnace did not terrorize Shadrach, Meshach, or Abed-Nego. Did they have Deuteronomy 4.15-20 in mind? Were they counting on God’s Word to deliver them through their own fiery furnace? What “fiery furnace” are you likely to face on any given day? Are you prepared to go through it? Explain.

2. Nebuchadnezzar “was full of fury.” Clearly, he was angry at not being obeyed by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. But do you suppose he might also have been angry at the Chaldeans? At himself? At God? Explain. Do people get angry at God in our day? Why? How do people who are angry at God respond when someone bears witness to Him? Should that happen to us, what can we do (Prov. 15.1, 2; Col. 4.6)?

Meditate

“It falls to the one who has been perfected to sustain nature’s common lot with courageous spirit, to bring it to better things and not to give way before those experiences that most people consider fearful and frightening. Instead, like a brave soldier, one must withstand onslaughts of the most severe calamities and undergo conflicts; like a pilot of foresight, he must steer his ship in the storm, and as he meets the mounting waves, he must avoid shipwreck by plowing through such waters rather than by turning away from them.”
Ambrose of Milan (333-397 AD)

Let *your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.* Colossians 4.6

Others may not like to bear my witness for You, Lord, but I...

Pray Psalm 115.17, 18.

Psalm 115.14-18 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are yours, let every soul adore
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

5 Four in the Flames

Introduction

God was working on Nebuchadnezzar. Where three men had been cast into the fiery furnace, four now were visible to the king. We do not know whether anyone else saw this vision; I suspect not. God was making Himself known to Nebuchadnezzar, because He intended to do a great work in him, as we shall see. It was not unlike God to reveal Himself in mysterious ways for the deliverance of His people, as we see in the case of Lot.

Read Genesis 19.1-17.

Read Daniel 3.24-27.

Think it Through

1. Nebuchadnezzar “was astonished”. Why? What astonished him? How would you compare this vision with the dream God sent Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2? Was it more vivid? More mysterious? Does it seem that God was ratcheting-up His revelation of Himself to Nebuchadnezzar? Explain.
2. Notice how Nebuchadnezzar addressed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in verse 26. Is this significant? What was their appearance when they emerged from the fiery furnace? How would that have affected those who saw them, especially given what we read in verse 22? What happened to the fourth person in the flames? The Aramaic word for *have power* (v. 27) indicates inability to affect, rule, or exert force upon. Is there a spiritual message in this for us who are the “servants of the Most High God”?

Meditate

“...this angel of the Son of God foreshadows our Lord Jesus Christ, who descended into the furnace of hell, in which the souls of both sinners and of the righteous are imprisoned, in order that he might without suffering any scorching by fire or injury to his person deliver those who were held imprisoned by chains of death.” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?” Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” John 19.10, 11

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1.8

I have power from You, O Lord, to be Your faithful witness, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Help me to draw on that power today as I...

Pray Psalm 115.1-3.

Psalm 115.1-3 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, “Where is their God on high?”
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

6 Defender of Deity

Introduction

Just a few years prior to the events of Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar had torn down and burned the temple of God, stolen its most precious artifacts to use them in worshiping his own god, and carried away the servants of the Lord into captivity in Babylon. But God has been at work in Nebuchadnezzar, and He's not finished yet.

Review 2 Kings 25.1-21.

Read Daniel 3.28-30.

Think it Through

1. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's response in verse 28 with that of Daniel 2.47. How are they different? This may not yet indicate true faith, but it seems that Nebuchadnezzar was moving away from his views in 2 Kings 25.1-21 toward something different. Explain. Does this sort of thing happen in other people? Does conversion to saving faith always come *suddenly*, or can it be more *gradual*? How should this guide you in thinking about how you work your Personal Mission Field?
2. Nebuchadnezzar intended to be the *destroyer* of God in 2 Kings 25.1-21. Here he positioned himself as the *defender* of the Deity (v. 29). But is he now *submitting* to God in humble obedience? Or is he *using* God for his own purposes? Explain. People use God without truly submitting to Him in various ways. Can you give an example? Is that a safe thing to do? Explain.

Meditate

"Before this, when they said, 'We will not serve your gods,' he was inflamed more fiercely than the very furnace; but now, when by their deeds they had taught him this, he was so far from being indignant that he praised and admired them for not having obeyed him! So good a thing is virtue that it has even its enemies themselves to applaud and admire it!" *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" Luke 23.47

Lord, give me patience, wisdom, and grace as I work with the people in my Personal Mission Field to...

Pray Psalm 115.12-18.

Psalm 115.12-18 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –
Will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,
All who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore
And bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

7 Course Change

Introduction

Daniel 3 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar heading off in the wrong direction as a next step from his confession in Daniel 2.47. He's trying to control God for his own purposes, but he will soon enough learn that he cannot keep God from doing what He intends. We're reminded of Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to use God for his purposes when we read about Simon in Acts 8.

Read Acts 8.9-24.

Read and Meditate on Daniel 3.

Think it Through

1. Nebuchadnezzar was headed in the right direction with God after Daniel reported and interpreted his dream in chapter 2: "The king answered Daniel, and said, 'Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.'" But in chapter 3, he took a misstep. He went beyond what God had revealed to him, and he sought to use God for his own purposes. Do people today try to use God for their own advantage? How can we tell when that's the case? What are some ways that people today go beyond what God has written in His Word?

2. By the end of Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar has learned more about the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. His first confession about God (2.47) kept God at a distance, in a realm of gods and "kings" (except himself, of course), as a revealer of secrets. Now God has made Himself rather more personally known to the king, and his confession indicates a greater appreciation of the nearness of God. Explain. Nevertheless, his confession in verses 28, 29 is not what God is seeking. What's lacking?

Meditate

"They came in order to worship the image; and they departed, having derided the image and struck with wonder at the power of God through the signs that had taken place with respect to these young men." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

*"I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
Listen, please, and let me speak;
You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'
'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.
Therefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes.'" Job 42.2-6*

Lord, let my confession of faith in You be always sincere and true, and let me show the sincerity of my faith by...

Pray

Pray through Psalm 115. Here we are reminded that, while God has given us much blessing and authority on earth, all glory and honor belong ultimately to Him. This psalm can help to keep us from veering off course with the Lord.

Psalm 115 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Idols made by men's own hand – ever to Your Name be glory –
see nor hear nor understand – ever to Your Name be glory!
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;
All those who serve them fall, but unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! -
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –
Will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,
All who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore
And bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Daniel 3

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Is every confession of faith in God a valid confession? Why or why not?
2. How can we know when, like Nebuchadnezzar, we're beginning to go beyond what is written in the Word of God (1 Cor. 4.6)? How can believers help one another in this?
3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego showed great courage before Nebuchadnezzar. Where does courage like that come from? When do you need this kind of courage in your walk with and work for the Lord?
4. What can we learn from Daniel 3 about serving God in a hostile world?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.