

Daniel Chapter 3

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Fellowship
BIBLE CHURCH

Question of Time

- There are no time markers given.
- Dr. Whitcomb's suggestion is plausible: this probably occurred after the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.
 - Nebuchadnezzar was “on top of things.”
 - He had enough time to forget his ch. 2 theology.

Question of Time

- There would also be enough time for him to forget this lesson when ch 4 comes around.
- During the upcoming years, Babylon would be trying to no avail to take Tyre.
 - This endeavor would take 14 years, 585-572 BC
 - Ezekiel 29:17-20, 571 BC in the spring.

The Image of Gold

- This was probably an embellished version of the image he saw in the dream of chapter 2. If so, it is a human image, and likely even a self-image.
 - It could have been an image of a deity.
- The dream image had only a head of gold; this entire statue was gold. It was very unlikely solid gold; probably just overlaid.

Fear Turns to Pride

- The king's troubled thoughts in 2:1 turned into arrogant thoughts in 3:1-7.
- Who builds a statue like this and then demands worship?
 - 3:12 indicates that the king demanded regard for himself, his gods, and the image. They are tied together.

Pride

- The statue being covered entirely in gold indicates that Nebuchadnezzar proposed a kingdom that would never end, one that would not be replaced by any inferior rule.
- Refer to Hitler's Third Reich, the planned 1000-year German millennial kingdom.

Pride Misplaced

- Nebuchadnezzar should have glorified God (taken “pride” in God) rather than in himself.
- It was God who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, and in fact, gave to him Daniel to help him actually have a “reign of gold.”
- Many were his enemies; he needed wise counsel. God gave it to him through various channels. The Jewish civil servants were one of those channels.
 - Daniel’s wisdom was famous (Ezekiel 28:3).

Pride Misplaced

- Ultimately it was not Nebuchadnezzar's might or wisdom that got him a victory over Israel.
- Even if his army had been disabled he would have won against Israel. See Jeremiah 37:10.
- The point was that Israel's unfaithfulness had sealed their fate under the Mosaic Law.

Dimensions of the Statue

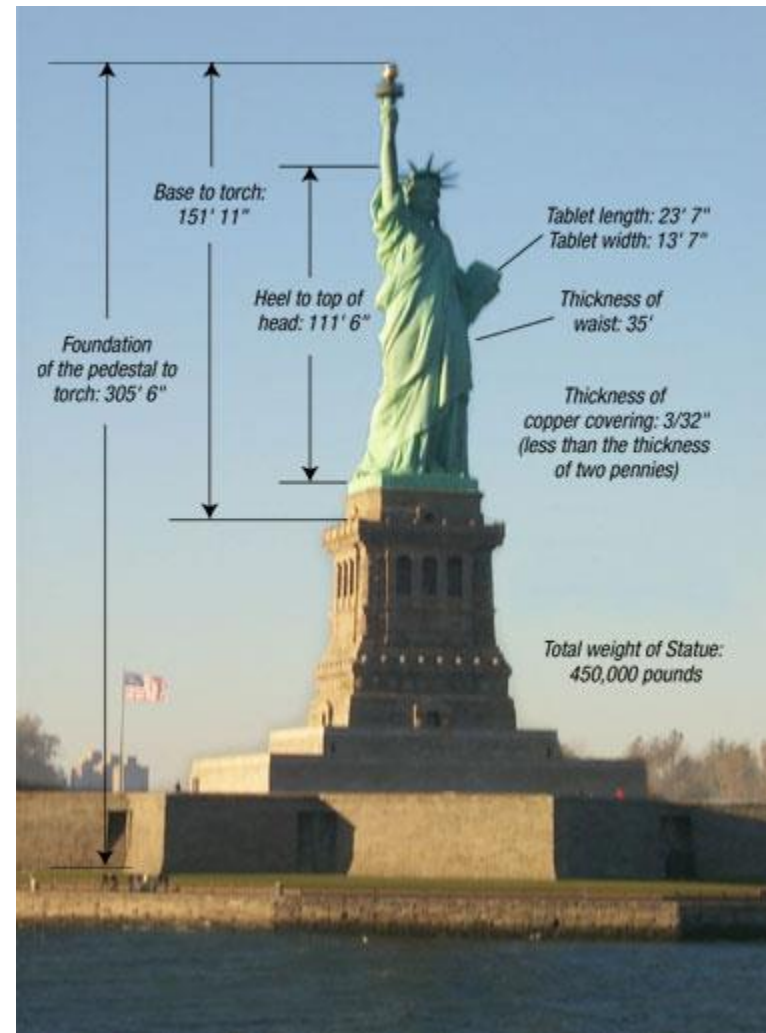
- The dimensions are given in cubits.
- I am going to take these as royal cubits, which are approximately 20 inches long.
- 60 cubits high = 100 feet high
- 6 cubits wide = 10 feet wide
- Base 60 was commonly used then. We still do...minutes, seconds, 360 degrees in a circle...

Proportions

- 60 x 6 or 100 ft x 10 ft would make for a very tall and skinny statue.
- However, there are some features that we should consider.
 - Possibility of an outstretched, upright arm.
 - Need for a substantial base as a foundation.

Comparison

- Statue of Liberty is 305 feet tall, but just over half of that is its base.
- Proportion 111:35 or about 3:1. Compare to 10:1 for Neb's image.



So...Proportions

- This would make a base of about half the total height a feasible possibility.
- That still leaves the statue a bit thin in proportion. That would not be a surprise given other images known from that general era.
- The image itself could be 50 ft tall and 10 ft wide, a 5:1 ratio which is much better.

Other Comparisons



Location

- Babylon was about 59 miles SW of the Iraqi city of Baghdad.
- Location of the Plain of Dura is unknown.



Don't Look Down...

- Modern culture can have a tendency to look down on “the ancients” as not having much engineering prowess.
- Edifices like this, or the pyramids, should put and end to that haughty attitude.
- Those “ancients” are the product of God’s creative design, not an accident of evolution!

Two Lists, v. 2, 5

- Verses 2, 3, 27: satraps, administrators, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, all the officials of the provinces
- Verses 5, 10, 15: horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music (ESV)
 - There are actually six instruments, not five (NKJV).

Why Repeated?

- In the first case, the emphasis is on the fact that *all* the officials of the empire, at *all* levels, were present. Many people were there. This dedication service was important to the king, as was God's purpose in it.
- In the second case, it seems to emphasize the variety of instruments used.

The Musical Instruments, v. 5

- The precise identification is difficult.
- The last two are Greek loanwords.
 - This has caused liberals to claim that Daniel was written much later, in the Greek period.
 - Objection: then why aren't *all* the instruments Greek in name?
 - It should be no surprise that a world-class orchestra would have exotic instruments from far away places.

Music in Babylon

- Psalm 137:1-4
- Isaiah 14:11

A Command to Worship, v. 5-6

- More importantly: every people group that was present, represented by their leaders, was told to bow down and worship the image.
 - This is effectively worship of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - It is worship of false gods (3:12).
 - It is a violation of the first two commandments (Exodus 20:3-5) and a sin for all people.

Method of Punishment, v. 6

- The Babylonians evidently used a furnace to burn malefactors to death as a form of capital punishment. This was a real threat.
- The Medes and Persians worshipped the god of fire, so they did not use fire this way. Instead they used lions.

The Worship, v. 7

- Under such a threat, most polytheists would bow down and worship. This showed their fealty (sworn loyalty) to the king and his gods.
- Only the most principled of worshipers of any other god would refuse. All true believers in God and Christ should refuse.
- Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stayed true.

Accusation Against the Jews, 8-12

- Certain Chaldeans came forward as Jew-hating tattle-tales. They reminded the king of his command (10-11).
- Their goal was to harm the Jews. It seems that they meant more Jews than just the three who were over the province of Babylon.

This is Nothing New for the Jew

- This was about 585 B.C.
- A similar thing happened as recorded in Esther 3:8-15, about 100 years later (486-465 B.C.).
- 1000 years earlier, the Jews were persecuted by the Egyptians.
- Many times since then, the Jews have been at war against others for their survival.

What's the Deal with the Jews?

- Satan hates Jews, and all Christians.
- Jews are closely associated with God:
 - Adopted as the national “son” of God
 - Glory of God in the temple
 - Covenants, Law and temple service
 - Promises, forefathers
 - Christ came from them

More on Satan

- See Romans 9:4-5. See also Revelation 12:10.
- Satan's basic character is to...
 - Kill – John 10:10
 - Steal
 - Destroy
 - Murder – John 8:44
 - Lie

Nebuchadnezzar's Rage 1, v. 13-15

- Nebuchadnezzar ordered the three Jewish young men to be brought. They are perhaps in their mid-30s at this point.
- He gave them another opportunity to obey.
- He said that they must serve “his” gods and the gold image that he had set up.

Nebuchadnezzar's Forgetfulness

- Had he forgotten how he honored the God of Daniel in 2:47?
 - Remember the words: “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets...”
- Spiritual truth is the most easily forgotten, I think because of our sinful natures. This is especially so for those who do not believe.

Response of the Three Men, v. 16-18

- Their reply in v. 16 is not insolent, though it may sound so upon first read.
- I believe that they are saying that Nebuchadnezzar already knows their answer by the life which they have lived heretofore.
- They know that he knows about their God.

Response of the Three Men, Part 2

- Believers are to honor God's ordained leaders—not as God himself, but as delegated officials and stewards. 1 Peter 2:17.
- Thus I don't believe these three would have been sassy. Instead, they were savvy enough to know how to act before the King, having served him for quite a few years now.

Response of the Three Men, Part 3

- Jeremiah 29:4-7 encourages the people in Babylon to be good citizens, and carry on as best they can.
- In the peace of their captors' land, they also will have peace.
- They will also prepare themselves to be stronger for the post-exilic period.

Response of the Three Men, Part 4

- Verse 17: If God wants to deliver us...
- They expect to face the punishment promised by Nebuchadnezzar. In it, they will trust in their God who is able to deliver them. Note their total confidence—not in deliverance, but in God!
- This situation was humanly hopeless.
- See Isaiah 43:2, Jeremiah 32:17, 27.

Response of the Three Men, Part 5

- Verse 18: If God does not want to deliver us...
- Notice that they do not presume on God to deliver them. It is very rare for God to deliver in a miraculous fashion. Example: In Acts 12, James was killed and Peter was not.
- Regardless, they are not going to worship false gods or an image to a man. That's conviction!!

Response of the Three Men, Part 6

- The three men feared God *way* more than they feared man.
 - Matthew 10:28
 - Hebrews 10:31
 - Hebrews 12:29
 - Ecclesiastes 12:13

Nebuchadnezzar's Rage 2, v. 19-23

- He foolishly ordered:
 - The furnace stoked up far hotter than normal.
 - His best soldiers to deliver the prisoners to the fire. These soldiers were killed.
- The men were thrown in with all flammables still on them. No asbestos suits.

The Furnace

- It could have been a conical type of structure, with the “chimney” opening at the top and a doorway or “working entry” at the bottom.
- Or it could have been a rectangular structure.
- In any case, Babylonians knew how to make very hot furnaces.

The Furnace, 2

- The furnace was probably industrial in nature, not only used for executions.
- They baked brick at 1000° to 1300° C.
- They smelted iron ore, at just over 1500° C.
- The “seven times hotter” was probably hyperbole, since 7000°+ C is higher than the melting temperature of brick and most rock.

God's Deliverance, v. 24-25

- We could title this “Nebuchadnezzar’s Awe” but it is God who is the important character.
- A “son of god” was in there with the three men.
- This is most likely a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ and not merely an angel (v. 28).
- See also Exodus 3:2, Judges 13:20, Hebrews 11:34.

A Miracle

- There was no sleight of hand here, and no Houdini tricks.
- There is no naturalistic explanation, such as “they found a cool spot in the furnace.” Such an explanation could not account for the fourth person, nor how the men found such a safe place when the soldiers were burned up.

More on Miracles

- When God does miracles, He does them very well...
 - Lazarus was totally raised and healed, as was Jesus.
 - Blind were totally healed, as were deaf, mute, paralytics, etc.
- God IS ABLE. Whether He WILLS is the issue.

How Could God Do This?

- The answer is contained in the question!
- Very easy. He is God.
- If you already believe that God made everything from nothing, then believing that God protected three men in a fire is also easy! It was nothing to Him.

The Witnesses of God's Glory

- Nebuchadnezzar called out the men (v. 26).
- The satraps, administrators, etc. observed that the men had no trace of fire on them (v. 27).
- God had arranged for international witnesses to this event. This strengthened their understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's decree.

Nebuchadnezzar's Response, v. 28-29

- He again acknowledged God because of this deliverance. He had attributed it to a son of God (or son of the gods), but now to an angel.
- He said they trusted in God, disobeyed the king, and yielded their bodies so as to not worship any but their own God.
- He honored God with an imperial order for the entire realm: don't disrespect this God, or else.

Results of the Miracle

- Once again, Nebuchadnezzar saw fit to promote the men (see 2:49). Why? Their character was loyal and faithful. Prov. 20:6.
- The desire of the Chaldeans against the Jews was frustrated.
- The imperial decree protected Jews throughout the kingdom.

Where Was Daniel?

- The text is silent on this point.
- Probably he was on official government business in some far-flung location of the empire, maybe even substituting for some who were present at the dedication.
- There are other possibilities, but we know that Daniel was not worshiping the image.

Application

- We can't help but note the friends' example of faithfulness—and not theoretical faithfulness.
 - They were willing to die before betraying God.
 - Connect to Romans 12:1-2 and 6:13.
- Work hard to remember spiritual truth.
Nebuchadnezzar was very forgetful. Are you?