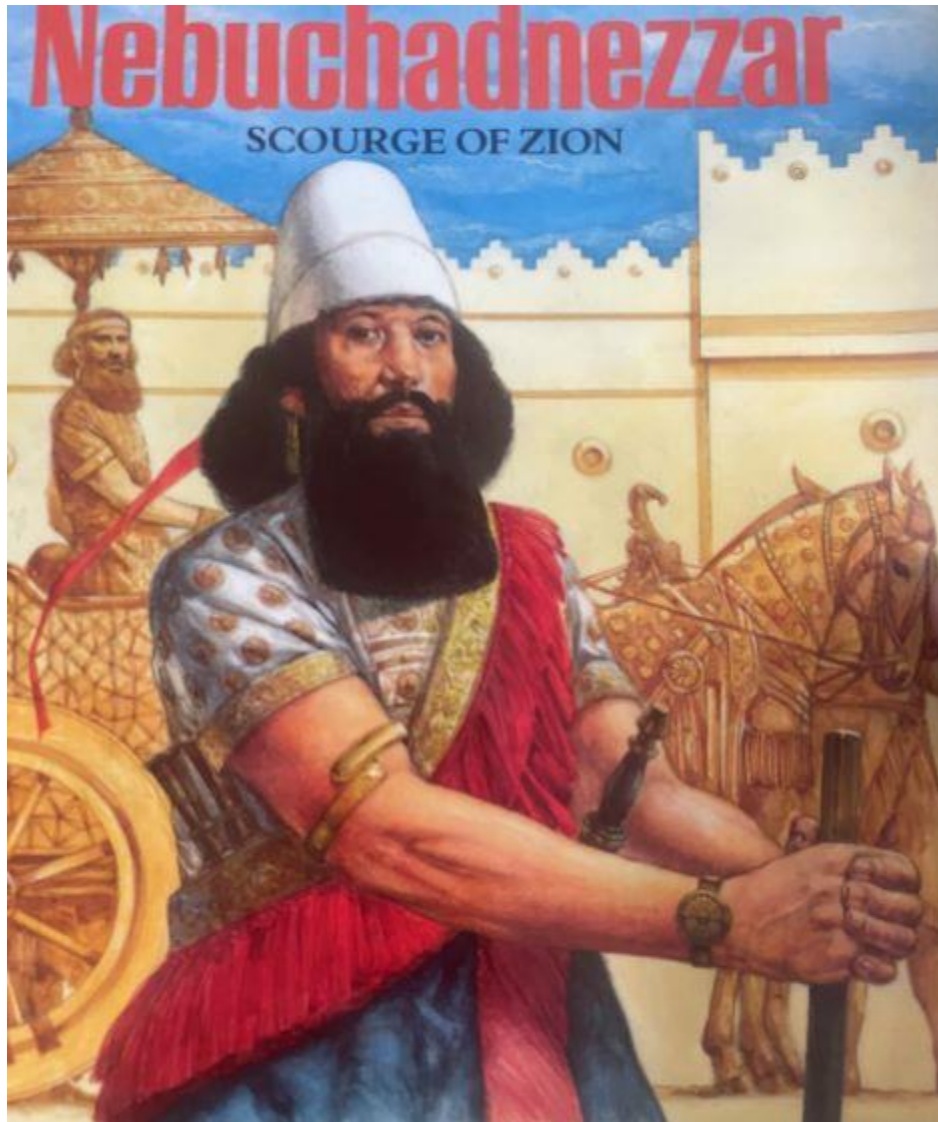


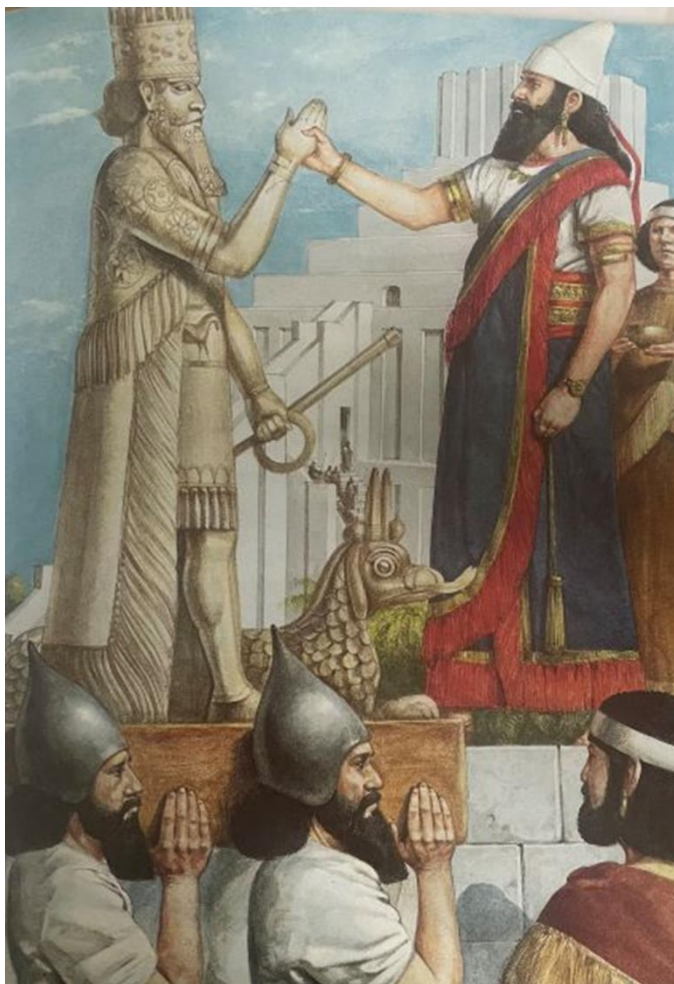
Daniel Chapter 3 - The Fiery Furnace



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.

Why did he do this? He had just listened amazed as Daniel had described and shown how the God of Heaven was the Revealer of Secrets, and how not only did Daniel tell him his dream of a great image made of different metals, but explained how they would be great empires which would all succeed his own. Nebuchadnezzar was very impressed, and promoted Daniel over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of

Babylon. His three friends were also promoted as well. But as Nebuchadnezzar considered this, we see his pride overcome that initial impression. He decided that he himself was greater than the God of heaven, and he would prove it to everyone. There would be no image made of many metals. No one would succeed him. So he had made a great image which was all made of gold. Not just the head, but all of it, and he set it up in a large open space near to the great entrance to Babylon so that all coming and going would see it. He then commanded that everyone should bow down to it. The Babylonian people were used to this kind of idolatry. In fact it was very much part of their culture



This picture depicts how in the month of Nisan, Babylon celebrated the New Year religious festival during which Nebuchadnezzar grasped the hand of his lord Marduk, and escorted statues of the gods beyond the city walls to the Akitu House. Marduk was king of the gods.

The Babylonians worshipped Marduk as well as a pantheon of gods. Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as a human equivalent of Marduk, king

of kings. In building the golden image he was presenting the claim that he as king of kings was also a god, and would be eternal – equal therefore to this God of Heaven that Daniel had presented. Here then was a direct challenge being made. His image a project to his

vanity was designed to proclaim his immortality in his eternal legacy. His image was a direct contradiction to what had been revealed. He was evidently quite put out! This image was 60 cubits high, and 6 cubits wide. The number 6 is often used in the scriptures to signify man. Appropriate measurements then to depict the vanity of man. A Babylonian cubit was fingertip to elbow, roughly half a metre, so this image was about 30 metres high by 3 metres wide. Seems a strange tall thin image, with these measurements, but then most likely it was an image on a golden pillar, so that it could be easily seen.

It is important to remember that what Nebuchadnezzar was typical of Babylonian behaviour, culture and thought. The legacy of Babylon would indeed live on, but not as this king would think. This ideology of the head of gold would be the way of religious worship for years to come.

For Babylon the Great, the Roman Catholic system that evolved from this vanity also commanded universal worship of the image of the beast – see Revelation 13:14,15 – the one who regarded himself as god *shewing himself that he is God* (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all the leaders and rulers of the provinces come and listen to his dedication of his image, and he issued a decree that when the royal band played, then every person in the locality should immediately fall down and worship. Six different types of musical instrument are described – six again – all with loud shrill noise, which would have been heard in fact right across the city and its environs. Musical instruments originally designed to comfort and provide solace, misused to control and manipulate the masses. Exactly what the music industry does today of course.

Nebuchadnezzar commanded the herald: 4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages... surely a catholic edict – universal (as the word catholic means) - that

whoever did not bow down and worship when the royal bands signalled, anyone caught not refusing to worship would be thrown into the fiery furnace.

It is a fact of history, that this sadistic method of death was quite preferred by the Catholic Church, perfecting the burning at the stake, of all dissidents and protestants. Of course Protestant, daughter of the Catholic church did the same back.

The same men, - the 'wisemen' of Babylon, who Daniel had indirectly exposed and shown as frauds and deceivers, but in fact he had also saved their lives, were the same men who now showed their gratitude, by turning informers, - Proverbs 14:30 states that envy is the rottenness of the bones.

12-13: 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. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

After Inquisition was made, the three faithful men, friends of Daniel admitted that they refused to bow down to this image, refused to serve any of the Babylonian gods. But the King Nebuchadnezzar showed that he was not just a megalomaniac, a cruel tyrant who was out of control, we must not forget that he had been very impressed by the Revelation which Daniel had presented from the God of Heaven. He gave the three men, who also believed in this God of heaven another opportunity to bow down to his gods. He didn't really want them thrown into the fire – he could see that they had been delivered because of envy – see Matthew 27:18 for a comparison. He gave them an ultimatum. If you worship my gods, then you will be released, but if not you will be thrown straight away

into the fire and then he asks: *who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*

16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter* – no they were not going to hide behind subtlety or diplomacy and talk themselves out of this one. Paul before Agrippa made a similar statement (Acts 26) , making the most of the opportunity to witness before kings of the supremacy of the One Great Sovereign – the God of heaven. Nebuchadnezzar had asked who is this God that will deliver you. It was not now for the three friends to do anything. All they could do was rest upon the Lord. How many noble and courageous saints have been in this position over the centuries? Men and women of whom the world is not worthy – and we consider our light afflictions which endure but for a moment – we have not yet resisted unto blood – and these have not yet been vindicated - God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect!! Truly the grace of God is astounding. The three friends were united in their resolve, and firm in their belief that they would be delivered from the fire. Of course, they were convinced of their resurrection to rise at the last day. *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.*

The courage and resistance of these men, sent a direct challenge to the whole system of Babylonian idol worship, and indeed their system of command and control. Two unyielding forces. There was only ever going to be one winner. Nebuchadnezzar commanded in his fury and rage that the furnace be heated seven times hotter – he was being used as unknowing participant in a public demonstration,- and he commanded that these men be thrown into the fire... the fire was so hot in fact that the hired thugs who were told to hurl the

three inoffensive Jews into the fire, were themselves overcome by the extreme heat and burned to a crisp.

The nations who were responsible for the burning of the Jews in their ghettos and in the Nazi ovens of Germany, the nations who aided and abetted, and the nations who in their hatred of Jews chased persecuted, beat, oppressed, murdered them in their millions, will themselves be consumed, in the burning lake of fire of post Armageddon retribution in the fiery furnace of Europe.



24-25: 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. 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.

The fourth is like the Son of God. The faith in the Goodness and Mercy of God in the hearts of these three men gave them strength as they were bundled up in their coats and thrown into the fire. They believed they would rise again from the ashes. But the gentle and loving mercy of God proved to be far greater than the red hot rage of this king. The angel who preserveth the faithful was with them all along, and revealed himself in the fire, he was with them there too. This is true as the faithful endure the flames of adversity, where their faith is tried as gold is tried, the angel of the Lord is always there

ready to hold and lift up and carry, so that they can withstand the sternest trial, so that they will endure even to the end, and so shall be saved. The fourth is like the Son of God. He is standing on the right hand of the Almighty, the Saviour, interceding, praying and pleading, to ensure that his friends are protected from even the stench of the fire, the corruption of death.

When the king called them to come out of the fire, they simply walked out, death had no power over them, *nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.*

Now, Nebuchadnezzar addressed them referring to their God, not as the God of Heaven but as the Most High God....he was getting there! – what does it take to get some people to see the most obvious truth – and how much unnecessary suffering has been inflicted upon the dispossessed and vulnerable by the powerful and mighty, because of ignorance – such is the way of man.

The king acknowledged – he was forced to acknowledge the Absolute Sovereignty the Omnipotence of the God of the Jews – the Most High God, over all the inert, gods of Babylon which only existed in the vivid imaginations of the ignorant. He came to this conclusion because of the willing and unflinching sacrifice that these friends made, in order that the Name of God be glorified. So in an even greater way, the Lord Jesus – the Son of God, trusted in the Most High God, and yielded his body, and so was delivered because he trusted in Him who would deliver, and so provided the salvation for all those who submit and yield to the Most High.

Brother Terry