

Daniel 2:46-3:15 – Nebuchadnezzar Makes an Image

Chapters 2 and 3 both have images as a focus. Chapter 2 contained an image in a dream which God gave to king Nebuchadnezzar. Chapter 3 contains a monstrous golden image made by Nebuchadnezzar. Are the images related? I'm not big on coincidences. The image in the dream was about the kingdom of Babylon and 3 kingdoms which would come after Babylon. There was also a fifth kingdom in the dream which was not part of the image. That kingdom is the kingdom of God which will continue forever and outlast all other kingdoms. God revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel who then passed the information on to the king. Daniel gave God the glory. The end of chapter 2 contains Nebuchadnezzar's response to learning the interpretation of the dream. The question for Nebuchadnezzar was that after finding out that he was the head of gold on the image, would that go to his head?

Read Daniel 2:46-49.

In verse 46, how did Nebuchadnezzar respond to hearing the dream's interpretation? ESV has "fell upon his face and paid homage". NASB, NKJV and NIV are similar. ESV has "commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him". NASB, NKJV and NIV are similar. Other versions contain the idea of "gift" and "perfume". Does the verse mean that Nebuchadnezzar responded to Daniel like he was a god? We are not directly told how Daniel responded. (2:46)

In verse 47, what did the king say about God? Did the king then become a true believer in the one true God? (2:47)

In verse 48, how was Daniel rewarded? What request did Daniel make for his three friends? Note that Daniel remained at the king's court. (2:48-49)

Read Daniel 3:1-10.

In verse 1, what did king Nebuchadnezzar make? Where did he make it? We are not told when he made it, why he made it or what it looked like? Did it look like a person, an animal or a combination or something totally different? We don't know. We just know the size, the material and the place. It was later revealed how he planned to use it. (3:1)

Dale Ralph Davis in "The Message of Daniel" notes the many word and phrase repetitions in chapter 3. He says that it takes on a mocking tone. I know that when I hear the enumeration of the six instruments for the fourth time, I groan and say, "Not again! Can't you just say 'the various musical instruments'?" (3:1-18)

Verses 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, and 18 describe the image as “set up” or “made”. What do we know about man-made deities? This golden image was a big one but it was still a man-made “god”. See Isaiah 44:14-20.

There is a lot of repetition in verses 2 and 3. Who was gathered for the dedication of the image that the king set up? (3:2-3)

What were those gathered told to do when they heard the music? Was this a suggestion or a command? What were the consequences if someone didn’t go along with the crowd? We were not told where Daniel was for this dedication. (3:4-6)

How did the crowd respond to the directive to fall down and worship the image? For a Jew, this was a first commandment issue. Was there any wiggle room there for a Jew to obey the first commandment and still fall down before the image? “I wouldn’t really mean it. I’m kneeling on the outside but standing on the inside”. “When in Rome (or Babylon in this case)...” “It would be impolite not to”. “I could be killed if I don’t and then how could I serve God?” It is natural for sinners to rationalize sin. We, like Peter, may say that we would never deny Jesus, but then reality hits. (3:7)

Read Daniel 3:8-15.

From the previous verses, everyone was standing before the image. When the music played, the crowd fell down and worshiped. Anyone who remained standing would be easily observed. In verses 8-12, who were called out as not falling down and worshiping? Something was added to the accusation that was not in the command described previously. The Chaldeans said that there were three who did not serve the king’s gods. When did serving an idol become part of the deal? The ESV assigns an evil intent to the Chaldeans when it says “maliciously accused”. Most other versions simply say that they made an accusation. Note the repetition in these verses. (3:8-12)

From verses 13-15, how did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the accusation made by the Chaldeans? Note again the repetition in these verses. How did Nebuchadnezzar verify the accusation? What question did the king ask at the end of verse 15? The king may have thought it was a rhetorical question, but it was not. While we might not be threatened with death for not following the crowd, what are some ways that we, as Christians, are pressured to follow the crowd and compromise on God’s law? (3:13-15)