

DANIEL 3

STUDY GUIDE



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DANIEL 3 STUDY GUIDE

In Daniel 3, we read the story of Daniel's three friends who were forced to decide between true and false worship. According to Ussher's chronology, the space of time between the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 and the events of chapter 3 was 23 years.

This story is a fitting illustration of the cosmic battle between good and evil which has taken place for many people throughout history. But it is especially typical of the final battle before the coming of Christ, where all nations will have to choose either the "mark of the beast" or God's sign of true worship. This theme of choosing between God and His archrival runs through both the books of Daniel and Revelation.

The ending of the story is a thrilling reminder that God will go with His people through all tribulation and deliver them, but even if He does not and allows us to experience persecution, trial or even death, there is a higher purpose, and as the three friends, we should still stay faithful to God. Death is not the end, for when we are faithful to God, He promises us eternal life in the heaven that He has prepared for us.

Please note: The entire chapter is provided here below, but because the study refers frequently to specific verses, it will be easier to complete it using a Bible opened to the chapter we are studying. This will prevent having to flip back to the pages at the beginning of the lesson as you progress through the lesson. You may also want to add notes or mark passages directly in your Bible.

These studies use the King James Version. Please keep in mind that if you use a different version, Bible verse fill-in-the-blank questions will not be a perfect fit and will not yield results that match the answers given in the answer key.

Daniel 3, KJV

1Nebuchadnezzar 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.

2Then 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.

3Then 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.

4Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5That 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:

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

7Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

9They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

10Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:

11And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

12There 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.

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

14Nebuchadnezzar 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?

15Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye 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?

16Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17If 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.

18But 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.

19Then 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.

20And 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 flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

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.

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.

29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:1-6

1) How did the statue that Nebuchadnezzar built differ from the one in his dream?

A: _____

Nebuchadnezzar made the statue from head to foot of gold in opposition to the four metals of the image God showed him in his dream, recorded in chapter 2. The image in his dream foretold Babylon's fall to the inferior kingdoms of silver, brass and iron. After receiving the interpretation of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar had humbled himself and worshiped the God of heaven.

But over the years, he lost the humility of mind and respect for God. Not willing for his empire to cease, the king made this image entirely of gold, proclaiming that Babylon would never end.

The statue's dimensions were a height of threescore cubits and a breadth of 6 cubits. The breadth is the distance from side to side of something, and so we can only assume it was the width and the depth.



A score = 20 and threescore is 3×20 , so 60 cubits. 60 cubits x 6 cubits x 6 cubits would have been the size of the image – a number reminiscent of the 666 in the book of Revelation which is a number associated with defiance of God’s laws. With Babylonian knowledge of mysteries and the occult, it’s not surprising that they used these numbers when building the statue.

In modern imperial measurements a cubit is 18 inches. $18 \times 60 = 1080$ inches which equals exactly 90 feet. Six cubits in imperial measurements is 108 inches or 9 ft. So in modern imperial measurements, the statue would have been 90 ft x 9 ft x 9 ft. Interestingly, the number 9 is often associated with the occult. This may just be a coincidence, but whether using Biblical measurements or the modern equivalent, the statue was a direct challenge to the God of heaven who is in control of the nations of this world. God had predicted a different outcome than what Nebuchadnezzar wanted to hear.

2) Was the dedication ceremony held for the general public?

A: _____

No, the dedication ceremony was specifically for public servants and everyone who held any office of government. The decree was issued by Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of kingdoms, showing his authority. Anyone who held an important position in the state was instructed to come to the dedication of the image.

“It was a great occasion and all subject kings and governors dared not disobey the mandates of this universal king. Heaven was watching with intense interest, for this was the occasion when the highest worldly authority was to meet the government of God.” (1)

This would have included Daniel and his three friends, but for some reason that the Bible does not specify, Daniel was not in attendance.

3) How was this gathering more than simply a dedication ceremony?

A: _____

The announcement of the king’s ultimatum—worship the image or you’ll be burned alive!—made this dedication ceremony a test of loyalty to the king. The large crowd of dignitaries and administrators gathered in the plain of Dura at the king’s command. They had had time to think about what they would do, for it would have taken a while to build the statue.

Interestingly enough, the king used music to indicate that it was time to bow to the image. “All kinds of music.”

The sackbut was an early kind of trombone. The psaltery was a zither, and the dulcimer was an ancient kind of guitar. When the music played, everyone was to bow down or be cast into a burning fiery furnace which was like a giant incinerator.



Left - right from top: dulcimer, [psaltery](#), sackbut

Daniel 3:7-15

4) When the Chaldeans complained about Daniel's three friends, what accusation did they compound with the charge of not worshipping the image?

A: _____

The accusers made it seem that not worshipping the image was the same as having no regard for the king.

Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not worship the image, the accusers said they had no regard for the king also. This was false.

When the music played, all the people fell down and worshiped the golden image that had been set up. This included people of many languages and many nations, indicating that these must have been some of the nations that Babylon had assimilated.

Only three Jewish captives would not bow. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have easily pretended to buckle their sandals when the music started to play, or crouched, even if they did not bow. But they stood firm and tall in the sea of prostrate people.

Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego even go to the plain of Dura to be tested? They surely knew that they would not bow if they were going to be asked. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had respect for the king, and they obeyed the king as far as they could. Only when the king's command directly contravened the principles and laws of God could they not obey.



Very quickly the Chaldeans brought it to the attention of the king. This was their opportunity to accuse these high-ranking Jews, ex-slaves, before the king.

The accusation had three parts: 1) the named Hebrews had no consideration for the king, 2) they do not serve the king's gods, and 3) they did not worship the golden image. The last two of the charges were the evidence that supported the first charge. The accusers made the case that the three Jews had no respect for the king as was proved by the fact that they did not join with him in serving his gods.

The accusations implied that since these three men did not unite with the king in seeking the favor of the gods, they were actually working against him and his kingdom. After all, the Babylonians believed that they needed the help of Babylon's gods and they were afraid of offending them. The implication was that the three Hebrews had offended Babylon's gods by not bowing to the idol the king had set up. The accusers insinuated that the Hebrews' defiance was an act of treason that put the whole empire at risk and threatened the common good.

The accusers knew these young men had never accepted the religion of Babylon as their own. And they reminded the king that he had set these three up over the affairs of the province. They painted them as ungrateful and defiant.

5) How did Nebuchadnezzar reveal his contempt for God?

A: _____

Nebuchadnezzar was so full of pride, he made himself out to be even more powerful than God. He dared the three Hebrews to defy him, implying that not even their God could deliver them from him, for he said, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

When the king was told about the three men who wouldn't bow to his image, he was incensed. He had patterned the image after the one shown him by the God of the Jews. How could these Jews not bow down and worship at his command? After elevating these men to high positions, men who had been nothing but slaves, could they now disregard the laws of their king, who deserved their respect and homage?

How far had Nebuchadnezzar moved from his original humility! Here he was demonstrating the very spirit of Satan, threatening to destroy any and all who refused to worship his golden image.

To his credit, when the three Hebrews were brought before the furious king, he asked them to verify that they would not bow to the image. "Is it true?" he asked. "Is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the image?"

Then he offered them a second chance—an opportunity to rethink their decision. He would play the music again, and if they bowed down, well and good, but if they did not, they would be cast into the furnace for sure.

Daniel 3:16-22

6) What Christian principles did Daniel's three friends demonstrate in their answer to the king?

A: _____

The three Hebrews showed faith, loyalty to God, and courage. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not need a second chance.

“We are not careful to answer thee in this matter,” they said, meaning that there was no need to rethink their position. They were going to obey their God. They declared their confidence in God - “Our God whom we serve is **able** to deliver us” and “he **will** deliver us out of thine hand, o king.”

“But if not”, they said, showing that they would leave it up to God to decide their fate. Whatever God’s will was, they were willing to face it, but they were going to be true to the living God regardless. They refused to serve the lifeless gods of the Babylonians, nor would they bow to this graven image.

The three Hebrews showed strong faith when they chose to trust God regardless of whether or not He would deliver them.

God may not deliver us from trouble, but He will be with us as we go through adversity. See [Deuteronomy 4:30, 31; 31:6, 8](#).

7) What do you think Nebuchadnezzar’s extreme reaction tells us about him?

A: _____

Nebuchadnezzar seemed to believe he had the right to rule over men’s consciences. When the king saw that his will was not received as the will of God, he was “full of fury.” “The form of his visage was changed,” the Bible says. A “visage” is a “face.” The king’s face took on a satanic demeanor, and with all the force he could command, he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times more than it was customarily heated.

Then he commanded that his strongest men bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the furnace. His mind must have felt strongly impressed that something unusual might interpose on the behalf of these noble men, and so he ordered his mightiest men to deal with them.

But the fire was so hot that the strongest men under Nebuchadnezzar's command were killed just by walking up to the furnace to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in.

As Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he saw not three, but four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire. And one of them was in "form like the Son of God."



Daniel 3:23-25

8) How do you think Nebuchadnezzar knew the fourth Man was like the Son of God?

A: _____

He had heard of the Son of God from the Hebrew captives. (2) They had brought the knowledge of the living God who rules over all things. He also understood that the challenge put forth by the three captives involved allegiance to their God.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the burning furnace, they did not die. Instead, the ropes that held their hands and feet were burned away, and they walked around in the fire! And best of all, Jesus Himself joined them in the fire. It would be interesting to know what He said to them as they walked about in the fire for those few minutes.

As His witnesses were cast into the furnace, the Saviour revealed Himself to them in person, and together they walked in the midst of the fire. In the presence of the Lord of heat and cold, the flames lost their power to consume. (3)

God, in His unfathomable mercy, was not willing that His enemies should perish ([2 Pet 3:9](#)) and worked through His people, held as prisoners in Babylon, to save the Babylonians. (See [Jer 51:9](#).)

9) What lesson about God's abiding presence does this story hold for us?

A: _____

God will not leave us to face the fiery trials of life alone.

“He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a “God of gods,” able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him.” (4)

Daniel 3:26

10) How did Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude toward God change when he saw the power of God?

A: _____

At the demonstration of God’s power, the situation changed completely. Nebuchadnezzar humbly acknowledged the superiority of the God of the Hebrews.

Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he dared to the mouth of the fiery furnace, and he called out to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, calling them “servants of the Most High God.” Suddenly he was not upset at all that they chose to serve their God instead of his.

At the king’s command, Daniel’s three friends stepped out of the furnace. Before that great crowd of people, the power of the living God was on full display. Not one hair was singed, not even the smell of smoke was upon their clothes. The fire had “no power” over them.

Nebuchadnezzar's pride was humbled, and suddenly all his boasting was gone. He blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego declaring that He had sent "an angel" and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, changing the king's word, in other words defying the king and altering his mind so that he no longer needed them to bow to his image. He recognized that Babylon had conquered Israel because of the sin of Israel, and that these young men had "yielded their bodies" being a willing sacrifice rather than to serve or worship any god except the true God.

He then made a decree ordering every people, nation, and language to not speak disrespectfully against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God, threatening violence against anyone who dared to do so. Before him was a miracle that could not be controverted, and he had to admit that "there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." It seems Nebuchadnezzar had not yet learned that God is not a God of force. He still needed to refine his character.

According to Ussher's chronology, this decree would have been 26 years after Daniel was taken captive. Most likely, this event took place at the very time that the prophet Jeremiah told Zedekiah, the last king of Israel, to surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, so that Jerusalem would not be destroyed. ([Jer 38:17-23](#)) God was working with Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon through Daniel and his three faithful friends, while He was working through Jeremiah with Zedekiah. In His mercy, God would have spared Jerusalem, but Zedekiah would not cooperate.

God had warned them earlier that the city would be burned with fire. ([Jer 21:10](#); [32:29](#); [34:2, 22](#); [37:8,10](#)) Now He told Zedekiah to surrender so that the city would not be burned. The change reflected the fact that, because of the faithful witness of Daniel's three friends, Nebuchadnezzar had made a decree forbidding anyone to even speak against the God of Israel.

If Zedekiah had only known and had faith in God and had done as he was asked! God had made every provision to keep Jerusalem and His temple from being destroyed, but His instructions were not heeded and the opportunity of a lifetime was lost because Zedekiah refused to trust.

The decree made it easier for Jews throughout the whole dominion to worship their God freely. The miraculous deliverance of the three worthies would have been told to the ends of the earth. The principles of religious liberty and freedom of conscience were highlighted. And as the story was told, the history of the Jews was passed from mouth to mouth.

“The Sabbath was proclaimed....The glory of Babylon was for the time forgotten as the splendor of the heavenly kingdom and the principles of God’s government became the absorbing theme. Without doubt, some men dated their conversion from that day, and forces were set in operation which paved the way for the return of the Jews a few years later... The principles of God’s government - true Protestantism - ... were proclaimed before the nations of the earth.” (5)



But it would take yet another experience to affect King Nebuchadnezzar before he fully gave his heart to God.

To show his respect for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and their God, the king promoted them to a higher status in Babylon.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a thrilling example of how God will work for His people at the end of time. Those that will remain faithful to Him will also have to stand in the fire, but if they have clean lives and pure hearts, they will not be burned.

“These faithful Hebrews possessed great natural ability and intellectual culture, and they occupied a high position of honor, but all these advantages did not lead them to forget God. All their powers were yielded to the sanctifying influence of divine grace. By their godly example, their steadfast integrity, they showed forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. In their wonderful deliverance was displayed, before that vast assembly, the power and majesty of God. Jesus placed Himself by their side in the fiery furnace, and by the glory of His presence convinced the proud king of Babylon that it could be no other than the Son of God. The light of heaven had been shining forth from Daniel and his companions, until all their associates understood the faith which ennobled their lives and beautified their characters.” (6)

“The third chapter of Daniel may be studied with profit in connection with the message referred to in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. The principles are the same in both. All the world was called to worship the image set up in the province of Babylon; refusing, they would suffer death.

In Revelation there is brought to view an image to the beast,- governments on earth which will frame laws contrary to the requirements of God. Life and power will be given to this image, and it shall both speak and decree that as many as will not worship it shall be put to death. All, small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, will be required to receive a mark in the right hand or in the forehead. Men will be disfranchised for not worshiping this image; for no one will be allowed to buy or sell who has not the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Who will be able to stand the test when this decree to worship the image to the beast is enforced? Who will choose rather to “suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”? What children are now being trained and educated in these principles of integrity to God? From what homes will come the Daniels and the Meshachs?

This will be the final test brought upon the servants of God. The scenes portrayed in the third chapter of Daniel are but a miniature representation of those trials into which the people of God are coming as the end approaches. (7)

Personal Reflection

How did Daniel's three friends come to possess the mature faith that they showed when the fiery trial came upon them? Did it come to them suddenly when they needed it? No. They chose to actively practice their faith in the daily trials of life and "by reason of use" ([Heb 5:14](#)) their faith grew and matured. What are you doing to grow and mature your faith?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for standing in the fire with Your faithful servants. Please help me to live for You each moment, to do what pleases You, and to learn to trust You with the outcome. Give me the unshakeable faith to know that You are with me in every fiery trial. Amen.



Answer Key

1. He built it all of gold.
2. No. The dedication was for public servants, those who held positions in the government.
3. The dedication ceremony was a test of loyalty to the king.
4. In addition to saying they did not bow and worship, they also accused them of having no regard for the king.
5. King Nebuchadnezzar declared that not even God could deliver the three worthies from him.
6. Their answer reveals that they put God first and were determined to remain loyal to Him; that they had faith that He could deliver them; and that they had courage because even if God did not deliver them, they would rather be killed than disobey Him.
7. Answers will vary. His rage shows he had a pride problem and that he believed he had the right to compel men's conscience.
8. Answers will vary. It's clear from Dan 2 that Daniel desired the king's conversion and would have been working to inform him of the God of heaven.
9. God may not take us out of our fiery trials, but He will not leave us to face them alone.
10. The king humbly acknowledged the superiority of the God of heaven.

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4. Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917) pages 508-513.
5. Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of Daniel the Prophet* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1901), pages 45-46, [SDP 45.2](#).
6. Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* (Feb. 1, 1881).
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