

**The Cost of Obedience, Part 1**  
**Daniel 3**

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**I. The Golden Image (vv. 1 – 7)**

The Aramaic word for “image” is *sēlēm*, and it is used **five** times in **Dan. 2** and **eleven** times in **Dan. 3**. Therefore, we see a definite connection between these chapters. It seems this dream had weighed heavily on Nebuchadnezzar’s mind.

Now back in **Dan. 2**, when the dream was revealed to the king, Nebuchadnezzar had nice things to say about Daniel’s God (**Dan. 2:47**). However, the events of **Dan. 3** tell us that his heart hadn’t truly changed. **Matthew Henry** says, “Strong convictions often come short of sound conversions.”

It appears the more Nebuchadnezzar thought about it, the more he believed he could change the outcome of that dream. If the feet and toes of mixed iron and clay caused a problem with cohesiveness in that fourth kingdom, perhaps he could solve the problem by unifying the nations under his rule.

The “image” Nebuchadnezzar built is ninety feet high and nine feet wide. Some scholars believe it to be an obelisk (e.g. *The Washington Monument*). Others believe it was a very disproportional statue of Nebuchadnezzar himself, or perhaps one of his gods.

It was meant to be a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar’s power and the greatness of his kingdom. It likely represented Nebuchadnezzar’s will for the future.

If he could unify his kingdom. If he could demand the loyalty of those under his rule. If he could somehow quell the thought of rebellion, then perhaps his kingdom – the golden head – would endure.

By this time Nebuchadnezzar had already conquered the kingdom of Judah. He had already carried off treasures from the temple. Therefore, in his mind, he believed himself to be mightier than Israel’s God (see end of **3:15**). Nebuchadnezzar believed himself to be more powerful than Israel’s God because he had defeated Him on the battlefield.

Therefore, this “image” represents a very bold and defiant attempt to thwart God’s will. Just like his ancestors in Babel, he wanted to make a name for himself (**Gen. 11:4**).

Do we, like Nebuchadnezzar, try to thwart the Lord’s will in our own life. It is God’s will for us to rejoice always (**Phil. 4:4; James 1:2**). But do we erect an idol of grumbling and complaining, and bow down before it?

It is God’s will for us to hate the world and the things of the world (**Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15; Matt. 6:33**). But do we read the world’s books and cozy up to worldly philosophy? If we do, it always comes at the expense of our relationship with God.

It is God’s will for us to grow in grace (**2 Pet. 3:18**). Is prayer a priority for you? Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness?

It is God’s will for us to be reconciled with others and to live peaceably with all men (**Rom. 12:18; Eph. 4:25 – 32**). Are you resisting reconciliation?

It is God's will for us to evangelize (**Matt. 28:18 – 20**)? Do we make excuses to remain silent?

This amounts to building a monument to self, and we circle our wagons around it, and then we make excuses to worship the idol we have erected. When we do, like Nebuchadnezzar, we are attempting to thwart God's will for our lives. Oh, how we need to repent and die to self so that we might obey His will for our life.

Some scholars suggest the events in **Dan. 3** occurred around twenty years after **Dan. 2**, which would coincide with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Others suggest it may have occurred about nine years after **Dan. 2**. This is based upon **Jer. 51:59**, which tells us that King Zedekiah made a trip to Babylon around 594 B.C. Was Zedekiah at this event?

Now, "Dura" was a common name in Mesopotamia for any place that was enclosed by mountains or a wall. Therefore, the "image" was erected on a vast flat "plain" that was surrounded by mountains. Its impressive size, together with the gold's reflection, would have made it visible from great distances in every direction.

Position	Duty
Satraps	chief representatives of the king
Prefects	military commanders
Governors	civil administrators
Counselors	advisors

Position	Duty
Treasurers	administered funds
Justices	administered law
Magistrates	passed judgments
Provincial Officials	remaining gov't workers

This means that the most important people, working in the greatest government of its day, all gathered before this great image.

Everyone was there except Daniel. Most believe Daniel was either back at the palace, tending to the king's business there, or he was away traveling on the King's business.

It's interesting how Daniel's three friends have thus far lived in his shadow. In **Dan. 1 & 2**, they've remained largely in the background. But now in **chap. 3**, Daniel takes a backseat, and the faith of his three friends comes to the forefront. And though Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will never be mentioned again after **Dan. 3**, we discover they had incredible faith of their own.

In **verse 4 – 5** we learn there were several different nationalities and "languages" present, and the herald's decree would have been announced in Aramaic.

Many of these people, caught up in the grandeur and stateliness of the moment, would quickly "fall down and worship the golden image." Others would "fall down" when their emotional heartstrings were stirred by Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra. Still others would have been convinced by the peer pressure of everyone else falling to "worship the...image."

But just in case there was anyone who remained unconvinced, in **verse 6**, Nebuchadnezzar instructs "the herald" to announce the threat of death. Therefore, each person was given a choice that day. They could either bow down or burn up.

In **verse 7**, Daniel tells us that, "all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image."

For a moment, representatives from the entire civilized world were unified in their worship of this statue. It's almost as if the curse of Babel had been reversed.

The act of worship on “the plain of Dura” was unanimous. **Or was it?**

## II. The Gabby Informants (vv. 8 – 12)

The “Chaldeans” are astrologers. We were introduced to them back in **Dan. 2**. The Aramaic phrase translated, “maliciously accused,” literally means “ate the pieces of.” It would be like us saying, “I’m going chew to you up and spit you out!” Therefore, by this accusation the “Chaldeans” were not only expressing their severe hatred and hostility toward these men, but also perhaps their hatred of Jews in general.

In **verse 12**, the astrologers make a point to the king that these were “Jews whom you have appointed.” Therefore, it seems that jealousy and resentment were the reasons for their hatred. These Jews were given prime appointments – appointments normally reserved for the “Chaldeans”!

We said early on that Daniel and his friends were familiar with the Scriptures. They knew the law of God: “You shall have no other gods before me” (**Ex. 20:3**) and “You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God...” (**Ex. 20:5**).

So, faced with the choice of bowing down or burning up, they chose to obey God’s world. When everyone else bowed down, these three Hebrew friends stood tall. And they stuck out like a sore thumb with no place to hide, which serves as a reminder to us that taking a stand for the Lord is often a very lonely activity.

Apart from those conniving astrologers, it appears the faithfulness of these Hebrews went unobserved. However, they were for an audience of One – God Himself, who is always watching us.

**Warren Wiersbe** says, “True faith isn’t frightened by threats, impressed by crowds, or swayed by superstitious ceremonies. True faith obeys the Lord and trusts Him to work out the consequences.”