

DANIEL 3

Nebuchadnezzar's Statue & God's Divine Intervention: The Fiery Furnace

vv. 1 ➤ NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE OF GOLD: THE ARROGANCE OF THE ICON

[1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.]

It is ironic that after all the *controversy* and *anxiety* over the dream, Nebuchadnezzar did not take the message of the dream to heart. That message was that all the nations that the image represented are doomed to be destroyed and replaced ultimately with God's Kingdom. Therefore, all of man's kingdoms will be temporary. There was nothing of eternal value represented by the colossus in his dream.

The statue was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide, that is in diameter. Since a cubit is about 18 inches {the distance measured from an average man's elbow to the tip of his middle finger} this image was 90 feet high and 9 feet in diameter! In other words, it was as tall as a 9-story building and as big around as a city bus¹.

Truly this was an amazing structure to behold. Nine stories high and gleaming in the sunlight, it could easily be seen from over a mile away. When we remind ourselves that this structure was made of gold one begins to appreciate the magnitude of wealth put into the statue. If the statue was made out of solid gold it would have represented about 400-540 tons in weight. However, if it was overlaid with only a thin layer of gold (~1/16th inch) the amount of gold used would have been approximately 40-60 tons.

The plain of Dura was probably within a few miles outside of Babylon on an expansive flat area where hundreds of thousands of people could easily have been assembled.

Why did Nebuchadnezzar make this image? God had made him the undisputed ruler of the world. What did he have to gain? J. Vernon McGee makes three observations.

- 1.) This image demonstrates the rebellion of Nebuchadnezzar against the God of Heaven & the promotion of self. {Reminiscent of *Nimrod's tower* on the plains of *Shinar* = *Babylonia*, **Genesis 11:1-8**}.
- 2.) The image was constructed in the spirit of prideful boasting. Instead of showing gratitude to the God of Heaven, this was an act of defiance.
- 3.) Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to unify together the *peoples, nations, and languages* within his kingdom {refer to v. 4}.

So instead of humbling himself at this point, the king decides to build a colossal statue representing his kingdom of gold. Perhaps he thought if it were dazzling enough it would last forever. But as we shall see shortly, the king did not stop there.

¹ Since the height to width ratio of an average man is more like 5:1 and that of the statue was 10:1, then if the statue was a representation of the king, it must have stood on a pedestal of the same height as the statue of the king.

vv. 2-6 ➤ COMMANDMENT TO WORSHIP THE IMAGE: ADMINISTRATION OF THE IMAGE

[2 *And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*
 3 *So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.* 4 *Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,* 5 *"that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 "and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.".]*

Now there was going to be a massive dedication of the colossal statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected. This was to be a grand celebration, and the invitees included a veritable who's-who of Babylon.

[*to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates,*] Every tier of authority and jurisdiction within the government of Babylon and its provinces was to be there, including representatives from the king's brain trust—the *counselors* and *judges*. See **Table 3-1** for a summary description of these government officials.

Table 3-1. Summary Description of the Government Officials Commanded to Come to the Dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's Image.

Name of Official	Description
Satrap	[324 'achashdarpan (Aramaic) (akh-ash-dar-pan')] of Persian derivation; a governor or prince of a Persian province. Perhaps equivalent to state governor .
Administrator	[5460 cegan (Aramaic) (seg-an')] a <i>prefect</i> , a chief officer within a province. Perhaps equivalent to a county superintendent .
Governor/Captain	[6347 pechah (Aramaic) (peh-khaw')] ruler of a city or small district, captain, deputy or mayor. Corresponding to [6346 pechah {Heb} (peh-khaw')]. Perhaps equivalent to a city mayor .
Counselor	[148 'adargazer (Aramaic) (ad-ar'-gaw-zare')] a chief diviner, spiritual counselor/advisor. One who investigates and determines. This word is a derivative of the word translated <i>soothsayer</i> : in Daniel 2:27 . Equivalent to an astrologer .
Treasurer	[1411 gedabar (Aramaic) (ghed-aw-bawr')] a treasurer .
Judge	[1884 dethabar (Aramaic) (deth-aw-bawr')] of Persian origin; meaning one skilled in law, an interpreter of decrees; a judge, a legal advisor, a lawyer. Perhaps equivalent to a state or federal judge .
Magistrate	Magistrates [8614 tiphtay (Aramaic) (tif-tah'-ee)]; one acting as a law enforcer, judicial official. Perhaps equivalent to a District Attorney or county sheriff .
Officials	[7984 shiltown (Aramaic) (shil-tone')] a ruler , a county official .

[ōí *all the officials of the provinces...ö*] And not to leave anyone out, this included rulers/officials from all the other government agencies.

[ōí *to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set upí ö*] This was to be a massive celebration. The equivalent Hebrew word here is where we get *Hanukah* from [2597 chanukka' (Aramaic) (chan-ook-kaw') = consecration]

Along with all these officials there would also be *peoples, nations, and languages* from all over Babylon and all its provinces. The plain of Dura would have accommodated several hundred thousand people representing all the Babylonian provinces.

Unfortunately, there was a major problem with this picture. This statue was an image² that was to be worshipped and it represented nothing less than institutionalized idolatry.

It is interesting and important to note that the secular world will take a wonderful revelation from God's word and use it in an ungodly way, missing the point entirely. Such was the case with Nebuchadnezzar's response to the dream. He was the head of gold in the image so now he erects a statue, probably a likeness of himself, made to represent golden kingdom.

Man is constantly looking for a way to justify himself/herself apart from God's method of salvation and so is easily manipulated by Satan. Pride is an awful thing ó it keeps people from entering into a living relationship with God, keeps them from reconciliation and keeps them from eternal life. {See examples in *Isaiah 64:6; Luke 10:25-29; 16:15; 18:9-14; Romans 10:1-4*}.

Instead of letting God's revealed truth speak for itself, unbelievers impose their own twisted and perverted understanding on interpreting the Word of God. The scriptures describe this process in which ōí *untaught and unstable people twist [God's truth] to their own destruction as they do also the rest of the Scripturesö* {*2 Peter 3:16*}. Unfortunately, this has serious consequences because the Bible tells us that those who reject God's Truth are ōí *destroyed for lack of knowledgeö* {*Hosea 4:6*}.

Nowhere is this more serious and true than with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul gives this sobering message in *2 Corinthians 4:3,4*

ōBut even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on themö.

Even within the Church there are men and women who compromise and pervert the scriptures to suit their own ungodly thinking. They compromise the Word of God by falsely teaching the wisdom of the world. They take a topic or issue and try to 'stuff' it into some passage of scripture because of a personal agenda or to be popular 'with the crowd' thereby missing its true meaning and application. {See examples in *Galatians 5:3,4; Philippians 3:9; Revelation 3:17,18*}.

² **image** [6755 tselem (Aramaic) (tseh'-lem)] an idolatrous figure, form, image. From an unused root meaning *to shade*; a *phantom* [as a featureless form], *resemblance*; thus a representative figure.

Although false teachers and apostates do violence to the intent of God's Word yet His Word still goes forth and God promises that it will not return to Him empty ó that is, it will have its intended effect {*Isaiah 55:6-11*}.

First, Nebuchadnezzar's worship celebration was not only going to be *idolatrous*, but also staged as a *forced ritual*. There would be no room here for spontaneous, personal religion ó it was all contrived.

Second, Nebuchadnezzar was going to promote a *personality cult* ó his own. Down through history many individuals tried to immortalize themselves with *cult* worship such as the Caesars of Rome, Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro and most recently Saddam Hussein. {Refer to the Appendix for a discussion on Saddam's delusion that he is Nebuchadnezzar II}.

This is also very similar to the worship of the image and the mark of the anti-Christ described in *Revelation 13:11-18*.

Charles Dyer, author of *The Rise of Babylon* documents a fascinating event that took place in 1988 on the actual site of the ancient city of Babylon.

It is a cloudless September night, and the moon casts its shining image on the banks of the gentle Euphrates River. Thousands of guests and dignitaries walk by torch light to Babylon's Procession Street and enter the city from the north. Instructed to line the streets along the massive walls, the guests obediently follow orders. When the audience is in place, the dark-eyed man in charge nods, and the procession begins. Rows and rows of soldiers parade in, dressed in Babylonian tunics and carrying swords, spears and shields. Interspersed among the ranks of soldiers are groups of musicians playing harps, horns and drums. Clusters of children carry palm branches, and runners bear bowls of incense. Then come soldiers and still more soldiers in a seemingly endless line of men and weapons. After the procession, the guests attend a ceremony paying tribute to Ishtar, the mother goddess of Babylon.+

The director of that event, the *International Babylon Festival*, was none other than Saddam Hussein. He was celebrating the revival of the city from ancient times.

Evidently, the king Nebuchadnezzar had it set up so that whenever certain instruments played {*the horn/cornet, flute, harp/lyre, lyre/trigon, and psaltery/bagpipe/dulcimer*}, anyone within earshot was supposed to fall prostrate to the ground and worship the king's image. There may have perhaps been several hundreds of thousands of people assembled on that flat plain of Dura.

It is interesting to note that Nebuchadnezzar used music to initiate this false worship. There is something about music that touches the spirit. It can be soothing or agitating but it is usually a powerful communicator of feelings and emotions. Music can help sell a commercial product, set the mood in a TV show or movie or be used as a theme to represent a person or place.

Music can either lift up or bring down, it can glorify God or it can be used to glorify man. At seems that at the beginning music got a bad rap ó having been first mentioned in reference to the godless line of Cain in *Genesis 4:21*.

However, in ***Ephesians 5:18-20*** Christians are told to be filled with the Spirit and give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and to *“speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord”*

And again in ***Colossians 3:16***, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

When Elijah was on the mountain before the LORD {***1 Kings 19:11,12***} he experienced three mighty elements: (1) a great and strong wind that broke the rocks into pieces, (2) an earthquake and finally, (3) a fire that roared past him. However, we are told that God was not speaking through any of these dramatic displays of power but the LORD came speaking in a “still small voice”.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably hoping that the grand display of all this music and musical instruments would impress/awe the people and entice them to worship his image. But God came speaking to his servant in a “still small voice”.

Have you allowed the “world” to taint the way you approach God in worshipping Him? Are you more attracted to “glitz and glamour” when it comes to worship or just go along with what seems outwardly popular at the time. True worshippers worship in “spirit and truth” -- from the heart! The purpose of worship is to glorify only the LORD Jesus Christ both on the part of the worship leaders and the congregation.

Worship is a two-way street. We give God our praise and devotion and God speaks back to us by filling us with His Spirit and we rejoice! Do you get “hung-up” on musical styles of worship. Ask yourself, *“Is the music leading you to worship God in spirit and truth? Is God receiving the glory and honor from the expression of the music?”* True worship music will not draw attention to itself or oneself {as was the case with Nebuchadnezzar’s image} ó it will do what the Holy Spirit does: Jesus said,

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” ó ***John 15:26***.

If even the Holy Spirit does not testify of Himself but testifies only of Jesus Christ, should not our worship music?

The answers to these questions will depend on the motivation behind the music style. Is the music superficially encouraging people to worship by playing on sentimentality or pride? Or does the music originate from a personal, deep sense of God's holiness, love and grace, a respect and awe over His wonderful glory and power?

Is your own attitude regarding worship constrained by the world's standards or your own selfish desires to “feel good about yourself”, has your worship become ritualistic? This can happen in subtle ways but it usually ends up in a general apathetic attitude towards God.

Example of the widow's mite: {***Luke 21:1-4*** }. 1/4 penny but it was ALL she had.

Most of us do not have great singing voices. You may only have a øpennyö voice but if you are worshipping GOD with all your heart, mind and soul it is more pleasing in Godø ears than one who has ömillion dollarö voice but has no love in their heart for the LORD. Although the context of Paulø exhortation in the öLoveø chapter, **1 Corinthians 13:1**, is speaking in tongues it bears application to subject at hand because it is about what motivates our tongues. He says,

öIf I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.ö

In other words, my singing will be an ineffective, out of tune, musical instrument if it is not motivated out of a sincere love of God.

The answer lies in getting "real" with God, coming before Him with a humble attitude, with much gratitude for what He has done in your life -- a new life with a hope and a future in glory with Him. It is about a strong desire for worship to be an act of communication between you and a Holy and Gracious LORD and Savior. Worship music should engage our heart, mind and body, the emotions for the glory of God.

In a fashion reminiscent of the kingø other favorite method to deal with wayward subjects, the penalty for not falling down to worship the image at the sound of the music was swift death by incineration. A burning, fiery furnace awaited anyone who did not want to bow down and worship the kingø image.

vv. 7-12 > THE CHALDEANS OFFICIALS LAY A TRAP: THE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE INNOCENT

[7 So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. 9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up".]

Certain Chaldean officials, envious of the power and prestige of the Jewish -foreignersø lay a trap to destroy Danielø three companions. They realize that these faithful men would never deny their True God, Jehovah and so use that against them knowing king Nebuchadnezzar would be furious.

Note how this parallels the motivation behind the Jewish religious rulers set on destroying Jesus. It was because of *envy*, which fed hatred. See **Matthew 27:15–23** and **Mark 15:6-14**. This cause for persecution continued on with the followers of Jesus: **Acts 13:43-52**.

["There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up"] Certain Chaldeans, without an ounce of gratitude for what Daniel had done for them all, now want to destroy his three companions. They now accuse Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah with treason and rebellion against the king.

The question is asked, "Why didn't the Chaldeans accuse Daniel and try to destroy him at this point?" I think there are basically two possible answers to that question. (1) Daniel perhaps was away on an assignment as a head of state was not there locally or (2) Daniel was regarded as too well favored by the king and therefore in a class by himself. Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel the ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief governor over all the Chaldeans {**Daniel 2:48**} and perhaps for that reason was considered "untouchable". Easier targets {his three companions were more like city council administrators} were to be considered. Perhaps these Chaldeans thought they could "get" Daniel later.

If so, they were at least smart enough not to mess with their "boss". {However, Daniel himself was later persecuted under the conspiracy of Medo-Persian officials, **Daniel 6:4-5, 11-15**}. But the irony is that these Chaldeans owed their very lives to Daniel and his three companions.

This is the way of the ungodly, they are fickle and self-seeking. Paul says it like this in **Titus 3:3**:

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

But then Paul tells us that God provided the remedy {**Titus 3:4-7**}:

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Christian, are you rejoicing because you are no longer controlled by worldly passions and pursuits that have no lasting benefit? Spinning in a wheel, part of the "rat race" with no real freedom. No longer frustrated and suffering despair because you "play" worldly games, but you are now a new creature in Jesus Christ. Having the blessed hope and assurance of eternal life in God's kingdom!

vv. 13-15 ➤ NEBUCHADNEZZAR CONFRONTS THE ‘REBELS’: THE ACT OF INTIMIDATION

[13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"']

The refusal of these three Jewish youths to fall down and worship the image enraged the king and unleashed his fury. They who had lived lives of integrity and godliness up to this point were now to have their faith tested. When a believer's faith is put to the test it is on two fronts:

- (1) A temptation to **pervert** their faith. This feeds on the need to worship God but doing it on man's terms and motivated by fleshly desires. The scriptures refer to *covetousness* as idolatry {**Col. 3:5**}, *rebellion* as the sin of witchcraft and *stubbornness* as idolatry {**1 Sam. 15:23**}. So a perversion of this built-in drive to worship the One who created us {**Ecc. 3:11**} results in idolatry.
- (2) Pressure to **compromise** their faith. This is an attempt to rationalize and justify idolatry because one is not willing to sacrifice. After all, if I want to get ahead in this world, should I not cut a few corners, bend a few rules. It's really not that bad if everyone else is doing it.

These believers now had to decide if they were willing to (a) *pervert* their faith to go along with the crowd and worship an idol instead of God and (b) *compromise* their faith and spiritual credibility because of *self-interest* or being under the *threat of personal harm*.

Unfortunately, the Bible has examples of those that did just that, perverted and compromised their faith. Examples include King Saul {**1 Samuel 15:10-23**} and the apostle Peter {**Luke 22:55-62; Galatians 2:11-13**}.

Nebuchadnezzar generously gives these young men a second chance to fall down and worship the image. Ironically, he asks the question, "And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

But not too long before this the king was singing a different tune when he said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings" ö. {**Daniel 2:47**}.

How soon people forget the goodness of the LORD!

vv. 16-18 ➤ THE RESPONSE : THE ANSWER TO IDOLATRY

[16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up".]*

The response of *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego* to the king's ultimatum to fall down and worship the image or be incinerated was without conflict. This was because they knew that despite the circumstances, God was still and always will be in charge. Jesus, standing before Pilate for His life, said to him {**John 19:11**}, *“You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.”*

It was DECISION TIME: The decision to follow God and remain faithful had already been made for these men³. Therefore, when they were put to the test they did not have to stop and contemplate what to do⁴. Their faith in Jehovah was settled whether or not they would survive the burning, fiery furnace.

These men were acting in wisdom before non-believers and their testimony was not going to be wasted. Their speech was respectful, but firm and communicated the awesome power of God in overcoming the fear of death. We, like they, are to have our *“speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”* {**Colossians 4:5,6**}. Refer also to **1 Peter 3:12-18**.

This same One who these men trusted in would later come to earth clothed in flesh to tell us:

“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.” **Luke 21:12-15**.

The reason is found in the glory and power and goodness of the LORD:

“O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave; you have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing praise to the LORD, You saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, his favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” **Psalms 30:3-5**.

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” **Acts 20:22-24**.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” **Romans 8:18,19**.

³ Compare this with Jesus' conversation with Pilate in **John 18:28-38; 19:8-12**. Refer also to **Philippians 1:19-30**.

⁴ Compare this to decision Esther had to make in **Esther 4:10-16**. See also the example of Peter and the other apostles in **Acts 5:17-42**.

¶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.+. **1 Peter 1:6-9.**

¶ My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.+- **James 1:2-4.**

õ And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.ö ó **Revelation 12:11.**

The õblood of the Lambö secures the way for Satan's defeat. The ðword of their testimony' is based on faith. Note from **1 John 5:4,5** that it is our faith that overcomes the world ó and Satan who is the ðruler of the present ageø John also speaks of the testimony EACH believer has in Jesus Christ (**1 John 5:9-13**). This testimony is based on the gospel of the Jesus' shed blood for the forgiveness of sins {**Revelation 1:2,9**}.

These faithful young men knew that the word of their testimony based on God's grace and power would help them overcome this trial. They did not love their lives to the death.

vv. 19-23 ➤ THE THREE YOUTHS ARE THROWN & THE FIERY FURNACE: THE ADMINISTRATION OF INJUSTICE

[19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.]

[õ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.ö] How fickle the unbelieving world is. At one time king Nebuchadnezzar considered Daniel and his three companions, *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego*, unique and they served before the king. In all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them õ *ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.*ö {**Daniel 1:19,20**}.

But now, these people were not following the plan, they were not going along with the prescribed program.

Sometimes the LORD puts us in a ðfurnaceø only to refine us. It is like an athlete who wants to be competitive. He or she cannot sit around all day sleeping and eating, there is effort

and hard work involved in being physically in shape. So it is spiritually. The trials and troubles we go through as Christians are God's workout routines they are His 24-Hour Fitness centers.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

The following is a quote from Charles Spurgeon:

“Sir Francis Drake, caught in a dangerous storm in the Thames River, was heard to say, ‘Must I who have escaped the rage of the ocean be drowned in a ditch?’ Will you, experienced saints, who have passed through a world of tribulation, lie down and die of despair, or give up your profession of faith because you are passing through some light affliction? Let your past preservation inspire you with courage and constrain you to brave all storms for Jesus' sake.”⁵

vv. 24-27 ➤ THE FAITHFUL YOUTHS ARE SAVED: ASTONISHMENT AT THE INCIDENT

[24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.]

IT IS FAITH IN GOD THAT SECURES A VICTORIOUS TESTIMONY. You can read of many examples of faith in the *Hall of Faith* found in **Hebrews chapter 11**. Yes, by faith some have quenched the violence of fire¹ but still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. **Hebrews 11:34, 36-40.**

Charles Spurgeon has said, “AS SURE AS GOD PUTS HIS CHILDREN IN THE FURNACE, HE WILL BE IN THE FURNACE WITH THEM.”

⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*, (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990).

Up in California's "Gold Country", along Highway 49 between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe, one can still visit gold mines, some that operated for close to 100 years. In Grass Valley, California sits the Empire Gold Mine. Gold ore was dug from a mineshaft that extended 8 miles into the earth at a sixty-degree angle. Side tunnels dug outwards from the main shaft every which-way extended that for a cumulative total of hundreds of miles. After the gold ore was brought to the surface four stamp mills, each with six 100-lb iron hammers animated by a large iron camshaft crushed the gold ore into fine grains.

Then the gold from the pulverized rock was collected using mercury, a toxic heavy-metal substance, to which it adhered. Next it was put into a retort and heated to over 900 °F to allow the mercury to evaporate leaving behind "sponge cakes" of pure gold. Finally, the remaining sponge-like gold cakes were melted and poured into ingots for shipment.

This is sometimes what God allow us to go through that our faith may grow & for it cannot really grow any other way. We are crushed by circumstances in life and then just when we thought things could not get worse and our discouragement could not be any lower, the world threatens and distracts us with its "toxic" perversions. Ultimately however, God puts us into His "furnace" and all the impurities, the toxic elements of this world, are evaporated away to leave behind a purified servant, valuable for the Master's use & to invest in the way He seems fit⁶.

vv. 28-30 ➤ KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES THE GOD IN HEAVEN

[28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29 "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.]

What a change of heart! The power of God completely changes the king's attitude. Nebuchadnezzar now praises the God of the Hebrew youths, the LORD, and acknowledges that their God is greater than his god [Bel]. When God's servants trust the LORD He gets the glory, hallelujah-amen!

The LORD was willing to save His followers because He would get the glory.

⁶ I was listening to a pastor on the radio who had worked in a steel mill as a young man. He related the following illustration in regards to believers going through trials. To temper the metal it was heat treated in a furnace until red-hot and then dipped into an oil bath. When that happened, the metal let out a noise that sounded like a person screaming . but the metal was now much stronger than it would have remained having not gone through that process. This is what God sometimes does to those He loves and wants to use in a mighty way.

Note the king's admission that there is no other God who can deliver like this. To show his respect for this, he makes a decree that anyone who speaks any injurious words against the God of Heaven will come to a dreadful end.

In complete contrast to his earlier pronouncement, the king now promotes *Shadrach* [HANANIAH], *Meshach* [MISHAEL], and *Abed-Nego* [AZARIAH] in the region of Babylon. Another promotion comes from the LORD's mighty wonder-working power.

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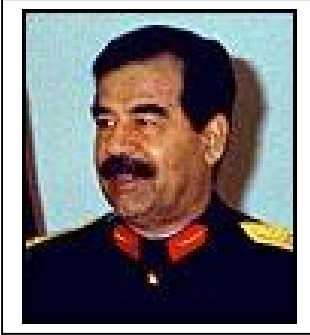
- (1) *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1988.
- (2) *Nelson Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright ©1986.
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Appendix

Saddam Hussein

Modern "King" of Babylon

By Ken Raggio



The Los Angeles Times, in October 1995 published a story entitled, "Iraqis affirm support of President Hussein." It was a commentary on the public election in Iraq of Saddam Hussein. The dateline on the article was "Babylon, Iraq." The article detailed the phenomenon of a nation voting for a dictator that had ruled by force for twenty-seven years. Apparently there were virtually no dissenting votes. Everyone was afraid that a "no" vote would spell calamity for the voter -- loss of food rations, government harassment, and possible jeopardy of life. Of 7.5 million voters, not one dared speak publicly against Hussein.

Who is this infamous, powerful man...

...who brazenly defies all the world, and strikes fear in the hearts of those he rules?

Hamid Youssef Hammadi, the Iraqi information minister is quoted as saying, "Saddam Hussein is a national hero. America had Abraham Lincoln, France had Napoleon and De Gaulle, and Egypt had Nasser. In America, you may not like Saddam, but he is a hero here. Saddam is the centerpiece of a "brazen personality cult."

Modern-day Equivalent of King Nebuchadnezzar

Nowhere is that more visible than in Babylon, where the Iraqi leader is cast as the modern-day equivalent of King Nebuchadnezzar, the warrior and builder who came to power in 605 BC at the tender age of 25.

Hussein, who helped stage a coup at age 31, has restored part of Nebuchadnezzar's 600-room palace.

Placed atop some of the original bricks, marked with Nebuchadnezzar's name, are others that declare, "In the era of Saddam Hussein, protector of Iraq, who rebuilt the Royal Palace."

A palace tour guide said, "Nebuchadnezzar was a man of war and peace, just as Saddam Hussein is. That's why people love him."

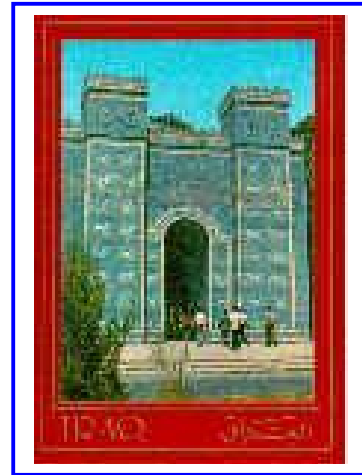
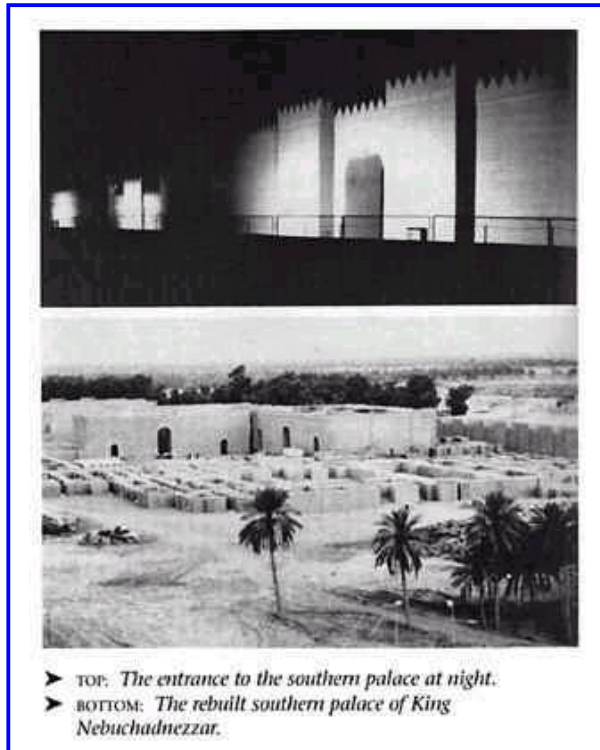
Babylon - Babel revisited

History, both Biblical and secular, record ancient Babylon as the seat of the most powerful empire in the world of its day.

Its famous "Hanging Gardens" were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

The western world, due to its Judeo-Christian orientation, remembers Babylon best for its role in capturing and destroying the nation of Israel in the seventh century BC. It was the captive home of Daniel and the three Hebrew children.

Babylon is also famous for being located in the same location as the more ancient Tower of Babel.



Babylon has been resurrected in our time

Charles Dyer⁷, author of "The Rise of Babylon" documents⁸ a fascinating event that took place in 1988 on the actual site of the ancient city of Babylon.

It is a cloudless September night, and the moon casts its shining image on the banks of the gentle Euphrates River. Thousands of guests and dignitaries walk by torch light to Babylon's Procession Street and enter the city from the north. Instructed to line the streets along the massive walls, the guests obediently follow orders. When the audience is in place, the dark-eyed man in charge nods, and the procession begins. Rows and rows of soldiers parade in, dressed in Babylonian tunics and carrying swords, spears and shields. Interspersed among the ranks of soldiers are groups of musicians playing harps, horns and drums. Clusters of children carry palm branches, and runners bear bowls of incense. Then come soldiers and still more soldiers in a seemingly endless line of men and weapons. After the procession, the guests attend a ceremony paying tribute to Ishtar, the mother goddess of Babylon.

The director of that event, the International Babylon Festival, was none other than Saddam Hussein. He was celebrating the revival of the city from ancient times.

⁷ Dr. Charles H. Dyer, associate professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary (B.A., Washington Bible College, Th.M., Th.D. Dallas Theological Seminary). Dr. Dyer has traveled extensively in the Middle East and is a licensed guide in Israel. He has authored, co-authored, and co-edited many books including *The Rise of Babylon*, *World News and Bible Prophecy*, and *A Christian Traveler's Guide to the Holy Land*.

⁸ *The Rise of Babylon*, Dr. Charles Dyer, Moody Press, 1991.

By 1990, over sixty million bricks inscribed with Hussein's name were on top of the very bricks that Nebuchadnezzar had laid.

Risen to Fall Again

In the days of the prophet Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of an image whose head was of gold. Daniel interpreted the dream. It depicted the progression of world empires beginning with Babylon to the end of an age.

In the end of time, Daniel saw that the Kingdom of God would crush all these man-made empires: *"Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold," (Daniel 2:45).*

There is much about Babylon and its role in Bible prophecy. Babylon in the Scriptures comes to represent much more than merely the city of Babylon located in modern Iraq.

Babylon grew over the centuries to represent an entire world system, as well as an evil religious system ("Mystery Babylon"). There are many other prophecies that apply to those representations.

Revelation 18:21-23 tells of the future and utter annihilation of world "Babylon":

"And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee:"

Additional References:

- (1) *Master of His Universe*, Time, August 13, 1990, "Iraq on the March", p. 23.
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- (3) *The Devil in the Hero*, Time, January 28, 1991, "War in the Gulf: Saddam and the Arabs", p. 64.
- (4) *Apocalypse Now?*, Time, February 11, 1991, "Saddam's Weird War", p. 88.