

"Who Is That God...?"

Daniel 3:1-30

This passage in the Book of Daniel is one of history rather than prophecy. It's an account of how God will protect His children, and it teaches us that we can trust God to carry us through any storm of life, no matter the outcome.

One of the key phrases in this chapter is the one at the beginning of verse 18 where the three Hebrew men said, "But if not..." They didn't know whether they would die in the fire or be delivered from it but they had no doubt in their mind that God would keep them through it – no matter what happened.

This passage also shows that we need to have the same determination they did regarding the influence of the world, and the attacks of the enemy. These three men were in positions of authority and prestige. They were in positions that would have made it easy for them to stray from their devotion to the Lord and follow the path of least resistance in the world. **They did not stray.**

When we are in a place of testing like they were, what will we do? When we are asked the question like they were by Nebuchadnezzar – "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" – what will we answer? **The world is attacking the Christian at every turn, and, in essence, asking us that very same question – "Who is that God?" Pharaoh asked a very similar question when Moses came to him and told him to let the Israelites go. He found out Who He was, just like Nebuchadnezzar did, and just like the world will do today – if we stay the course like they did.**

Exodus 5:1-2

¹ And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

² And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

Dealing with that question in vs. 15 – "Who is that God?" – we find several things that will help us see, from this passage, who "that God" is and what He can do for us today, and what will happen when He's not worshipped (part of that point will come in the messages to follow from the Book of Daniel on the prophecies for the world).

I. "THAT GOD" REJECTED – VS. 1-3

A. At the end of chapter 2 it's recorded for us that Nebuchadnezzar recognized the God of Israel as "a God of gods" (2:47) but in the time that took place between then and the events of chapter 3 something changed, and he rejected the God of Daniel.

1. That same thing happens today – people see God move and call out to Him and then when things get better, they reject Him again.
2. Our nation, after Sept. 11, 2001, was united and calling out to God for help – look at us now!!

B. In his rejection, the king made an image of gold – vs. 1.



1. Remember, the statue he saw in his dream had a head of gold that represented him – so now, he creates a whole statue (idol, as

it turns out) out of gold, to demonstrate that he thought he would be invincible (it would seem he thought he was a god and could not be defeated – he would soon change that view of himself).

2. The height of this image he had made was "threescore cubits" – 60 cubits, or approximately 90 feet high (about the height of the Lincoln Memorial in D.C.).
3. The breadth (width) was 6 cubits, or about 9 feet across.

Note: Something to think about – the number 6 is the number of man, and this statue was in multiples of 6 – could be pointing to the fact that it was of human origin.

"As an aside the dimensions of the statue are another substantiation that Daniel was written in the 6th Century BC, because the Babylonian system of mathematics was based upon 6's, whereas the Greek system was somewhat similar to our decimal system which uses 10's. It is intriguing that the Babylonian legacy of sexagesimal still survives in our day in the form of degrees (360° in a circle or 60° in an angle of an equilateral triangle), minutes (60 in an hour), and seconds (60 in a minute) in trigonometry and the measurement of time, although both of these systems are actually mixed radix." (taken from the website

www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_3_commentary.htm)

4. It was set up in the plain of Dura (somewhere near Babylon with a large enough area for all the people to gather, as well as within sight of most of the city of Babylon, and easy enough to get to).

Dura means "walked place". In such a flat location the statue would be unimpeded by hills or knolls and thus would be readily visible from quite a distance, an awesome site sparkling in the radiant sunlight. In 1863 the French archeologist Jules Oppert discovered a pedestal 6 miles SE of Babylon with dimensions of 45' square and 20' in height. Oppert felt that this was a possible site of Nebuchadnezzar's image, but there is no further evidence to substantiate this premise. (taken from the website

www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_3_commentary.htm)

C. He then commanded all the leaders of the nation to gather together to dedicate the image – vs. 3.

There is one person missing from this entire portion of the story – Daniel. He's not mentioned at all in relation to the gathering of the leaders to dedicate the image and one would think he would have been there, being so close to the king. We can speculate as to where he was, and why he isn't mentioned but there's no way of knowing other than to say that God didn't want him mentioned because the story was about the 3 friends.

II. "THAT GOD" REMOVED – VS. 4-11

A. He was removed from worship and adoration when they erected the image of Nebuchadnezzar and commanded he be worshipped in place of any other gods.

Scofield says this: The attempt of this great king of Babylon to unify the religions of his empire by self-deification will be repeated by the beast, the last head of the Gentile world-dominion (Rev 13:11-15). It has repeatedly characterized Gentile authority in the earth, e.g. Dan 6:7; Acts 12:22 and the later Roman emperors.

Revelation 13:11-15

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

B. Vs. 4-5 – the command was given by the

herald that when they hear the music they were to "fall down and worship the golden image."

1. This was a nationwide proclamation for all of Babylon – no matter the religion, no matter who they were, including the Jews (which, it would seem, many of whom actually did bow to the idol – vs. 7).
2. One of the main reasons for the destruction of Israel in the first place by the Babylonians was that they bowed down and worshipped false gods in direct violation of the first two of the 10 Commandments.

Exodus 20:1-4

¹ And God spake all these words, saying,

² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Deuteronomy 31:16

¹⁶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

Judges 2:17

¹⁷ And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

1 Chronicles 5:25

²⁵ And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.

3. Yet, today, it seems that God's people are being drawn into idol worship, of sorts – when we are drawn away from serving and worshipping the God of heaven, the God of the Bible, and we start serving "mammon" (the flesh, the world, our own desires, money, etc.), or we "worship" our children, or our job, or a movie star, or a sports team or figure, etc.
4. We are commanded, in the New Testament, to stay away from idolatry.
 - a) In 1 Cor. 10:14 the word for "flee" is in the present imperative – command to do this continually because we are continually prone to be ensnared by idols.

1 Corinthians 10:13–14

¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

¹⁴ Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee

from idolatry.

- b) In 2 Cor. 6: 17 we are told to not touch "the unclean thing."

2 Corinthians 6:11-18

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

(1) *"Come out" - aorist imperative* - command to do this now, and always, and to do it effectively.

(2) *"Touch not" – present imperative – command to do this continually because we are continually vulnerable to touch unclean things.*

(3) *"The unclean thing" – anything that violates Scripture, anything that would take us away from serving and worshipping our Lord.*

c) In 1 John 5:21 we are told to keep ourselves from idols.

[1 John 5:21](#)

²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

(1) *"Keep" (guard) – aorist imperative – command to do this now and do it effectively.*

(2) *"Yourselves from idols" – something we are to do, something we need to make sure we do on a daily basis.*

5. Colossians 3:5 points out that "covetousness" is equivalent to idolatry because it places selfish desire above obedience to God.

[Colossians 3:5-7](#)

⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

"The individual whose life is dominated by

the desire to get things has set up things in the place of God and that is the essence of idolatry. Covetousness is also the root cause of all sin, because when people sin, it is basically people doing what they desire, rather than what God desires. This in turn amounts to worship of self rather than worship of God, and this is the very essence of idolatry!" (taken from website www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_3_commentary.htm)

C. Vs. 6 lays the foundation for the greatest part of this story in Daniel – that the three Hebrew men were kept from the fire.

D. Vs. 7 points out that the people did, in fact, en masse, fall down and worship.

1. They did it out of fear because they didn't want to die.
2. We worship the God of heaven out of love because of what He did for us, not out of fear because we're afraid of what He will do to us – we've been redeemed from hell.

1 John 5:1-3

¹ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments

are not grievous.

3. That is not to say that we aren't to fear Him, but we are to worship Him because we love Him, not just because we fear Him.

III. "THAT GOD" RETURNED – vs. 12-27

A. Returned to predominance by the three Hebrew men – vs. 12-17

NOTE: They were no longer teenagers. It is estimated by this time they were nearly 40.

1. In putting Him above all other gods and men, no matter who they were – vs. 12-15
 - a) "Have not regarded thee" – didn't recognize him as God (as he was wanting to be worshipped) – they did recognize him as king, speaking to him as such – just not God.
 - b) "They serve not thy gods"
 - c) "Nor worship the golden image"
2. In trusting Him to deliver them either from the fire or through the fire – vs. 16-18
 - a) They didn't hesitate to tell the king they were servants of the Lord, no matter what – "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter" – vs. 16.

"We have no need to put thee to any further trouble; we have made up our minds on this subject, and have our answer ready: Be it known unto thee,

We Will Not Serve Thy Gods. This was as honest as it was decisive." (Adam Clarke)

- b) Their trust and dependence on the God of heaven brought their God back into prominence with the king and all those that were there, including the wise men of Babylon (the very ones that so hated the three Hebrew men).
- c) Their steadfastness in the God of heaven in the face of certain death should give us all the confidence to know that He's still in the fire of our trials and is waiting to deliver us – vs. 17-18.

1 Corinthians 15:51–58

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

- (1) *One thing to consider is that they aren't seen praying at all through this episode – they didn't have time to pray – they were already "prayed up" and knew God was there with them.*
- (2) *"If it be so" – if it really happens, if they are thrown into the fire*
- (3) *"Our God whom we serve" – as opposed to serving the gods of the Babylonians which they would not do*
- (4) *"Is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace" – this is a declaration of faith in their God as being more mighty than the other gods – our God is STILL able to deliver – same God they have is the God we have.*
- (5) *"And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" – they were not sure they wouldn't die in the fire but they were absolutely sure that God would deliver them out of the hand of the king, even if meant physical death and eternity with the Lord – either way, they would not worship that image nor the gods of the Babylonians.*
- (6) *"But if not" – they were not questioning ultimate deliverance, just whether they would die or not.*
- (7) *"Be it known unto thee, O king" – they wanted the king to be sure he*

understood them.

(8) *"We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" – they had made this clear before but for the last time they declare their utmost allegiance to the God of heaven Whom they serve.*

B. Returned for protection of the three Hebrew men – vs. 19-23, 26-27

1. In his rage (which visibly changed his appearance) Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than normal – vs. 19-20, 22.
 - a) "The form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego" – he had been dispassionate toward them to this point, wanting them to understand the seriousness of the matter but once he heard and saw their steadfastness, he became visibly furious with them.
 - b) "Heat the furnace" – it would seem that this furnace was built and used specifically for the purpose of burning people alive, which Babylon was known to do

Jeremiah 29:22

22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

- c) "One seven times more than it was wont to be heated" – hotter than it had ever been – although Nebuchadnezzar wanted to

maximize the punishment on the three, heating the furnace like that would have only been better for the men since they would have died almost instantly, as seen by the soldiers' death that threw them in the furnace.

2. Vs. 21 would indicate that they might have normally stripped the people of their clothes they were going to burn but the three Hebrew men they bound with everything on that they were wearing – shows the urgency of the king's wrath.
3. Vs. 23 – "fell down bound" – whether they were thrown down from a height or whether they fell down from being pushed in and because they were bound is unclear – all that matters is they were thrown in and they were unhurt.

C. Returned to receive the preeminence through the three Hebrew men as well as the king – vs. 24-25

1. The king is seen as "astonied" when he looked into the furnace and saw that they were unhurt – being astonished would be an understatement.
2. Vs. 25 is one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible, and one that is attacked more than many others.
 - a) "I see four men loose" – not just the three, and no longer bound – the ropes didn't likely burn off of them – it is most probable that the "Fourth Man" untied them.
 - b) "Walking in the midst of the fire" –

obviously unhurt and unhindered by the trial – they were still worshipping the God of heaven, even in the trial.

Psalm 91:1-10

¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

³ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

⁵ Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

⁶ Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

⁷ A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

⁸ Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

c) "And they have no hurt" – what a miracle!

d) "And the form of the fourth is like the Son

of God"

(1) *Not "a son of the gods," not "a son of God," but THE Son of God. There are many ancient language scholars (Aramaic, in this case) that say the "best" manuscript evidence has this as "a son of the gods," and although that may (or may not) be technically accurate, as with any language, the context dictates translation application when the literal translation is either unclear, or will allow for that contextual application. That is the case here.*

(2) *Some say he wouldn't have known who He was but considering his dream earlier and the "stone cut out of the mountain," which was Christ, it is very conceivable that Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of the Son of God then but didn't know it until now.*

(3) *Also, Daniel and the three Hebrew men would have certainly told the king about the Lord and he could have easily surmised that's who was in the fire with them – simply because of their testimony about Who He was.*

IV. "THAT GOD" RENEWED – VS. 28-30

A. Renewed because of the testimony and faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego – vs. 28

1. "Who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants"
 - a) Some say the "angel" here is the fourth man in the fire.

b) The "angel" here could be one of two things, aside from the fourth man:

(1) *It could be the Lord – sometimes called "the angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament;*

Exodus 3:2

² And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

1 Chronicles 21:16

¹⁶ And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

Psalms 34:7

⁷ The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Zechariah 3:1

¹ And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

(2) *Or, it could be simply an angel that came and loosened the bonds that bound the three men and then left (my personal opinion).*

c) One thing we are certain of – the Son of God appeared in the fire with them, and

they came out unbound, and unhurt.

2. "That trusted in him" – the king knew their testimony – he had heard it often enough, and now, once again, he has seen the fruit of the Godly testimony.
3. "And have changed the king's word" – that is, regarding the burning to death in the fire – since they didn't burn and die, the king's word wasn't fulfilled, his order wasn't fulfilled – it had been changed.
4. "And yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God" – that was their testimony, and because of it, "their own God" was renewed in the eyes of the king.

B. Renewed by decree of the king to defend the three Hebrew men against their enemies, showing God will protect those that are faithful – vs. 29

1. The decree was that anybody that spoke anything "amiss against the God of" the three Hebrew men that they were to be violently executed.
2. The reason for this decree is "because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" – Nebuchadnezzar recognized Who the God of gods was – again.

C. Renewed by the promotion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, showing that God will honor faithfulness – vs. 30

Conclusion: Once God is rejected, He will be removed, and it's only when God's people stand up for the God of heaven, and the Word of God, that He will be returned and renewed. Even though it may not happen world-wide, or even as a nation returning back to God; if we, His people, live for Him, and demonstrate His deliverance through our testimony (of a changed life) then He will be returned and renewed in our lives, whether or not He is by the lost.

2 Chronicles 7:14

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.