

Daniel 3:

Reading #401 Religion by force

Many years and many temptations later, Nebuchadnezzar yielded to Satan's suggestion that the head of gold should last forever, and made an opposition statue of gold from head to foot. It took about 23 years before this happened, but human pride will always overcome divine revelation unless the receiver is a child of God.

In the intervening time, because the nation of Egypt had defeated Babylon in a battle in 601BC, Jehoiakim the king of Jerusalem, thinking this was a good opportunity, rebelled against the surrender terms he had made when Daniel was taken prisoner in 606BC, and refused to pay the annual tribute. It was not until 597BC that Nebuchadnezzar's forces came against the city, and by that time Jehoiakim had died and Jehoiachin, his son had been ruling for three months. Nebuchadnezzar took him and 10,000 citizens into captivity and set up his uncle Zedekiah as the puppet king. (All this can be found in the stories of 2 Kings 24 and 25.) Among the captives was Ezekiel the prophet (Ezekiel 1:1-2; 33:21), and he describes what he was shown of the spiritual condition of the leaders in Jerusalem in chapters 8 and 9.

In 588BC Zedekiah refused the counsel of God given through Jeremiah, and defied Nebuchadnezzar, who promptly came back and attacked the city, and after a siege of two years, destroyed it completely this time and burnt the temple to the ground. This was in August of 586BC, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's sole rule. (See Jeremiah 21:2-9.)

It was in this situation that Nebuchadnezzar again thought that his god must be greater than Daniel's and decided to make it an issue. (He did not know that it was the living God who had decreed that he was the best man to be the ruler of the world. Jeremiah 27:6.) So "Babylon" was in spiritual conflict with "Jerusalem" again, but this time it was the real people of God whom it came up against.

***** (Begin Quote)

Daniel 3:

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore [60] cubits [90ft], and the breadth thereof six cubits [9ft]: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

***** (End Quote)

This statue was also that of a man as per the dream, but it was perched up high on a column so that great crowds could see it. (Nine feet at the

shoulders suggests that the statue was about 27ft tall which would make the pedestal about 63ft.)

***** (Begin Quote)

Daniel 3:

² Then 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.

³ Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king 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 people, nations, and languages, ⁵ that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up: ⁶ and whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace”.

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

***** (End Quote)

Messengers were sent out all over the world for the officials of the empire to come to the unveiling. Because it was desired that all should bow at the same time, a signal was to be given through musical instruments. Any who defied the order would pay for such disrespect with their lives. Thus a death penalty was attached to a law regarding religion. Needless to say, the majority found it no hardship to obey, for formal religion is only a matter of outward behaviour.

***** (Begin Quote)

Daniel 3:

⁸ Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans [the great opposers of Christianity] came near, and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live for ever. ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship

conversation with a fourth person. Only that which was illegal, the ropes, had been burnt away.

How did Nebuchadnezzar know what the Son of God looked like? We can be sure that Daniel and the others had told him and anyone who would listen about their Saviour, even giving a physical description of Him, for they would have seen Him often in their dreams and visions. When Daniel saw Him later in another vision He looked like this: “Then I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a certain Man clothed in [white] linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz [a golden belt]: His body also was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude”. Daniel 10:5-6.

When He was born of Mary it was said of Him, “He has no form nor comeliness [no special body or strength]; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him”. Isaiah 53:2. That’s because as the Son of man He desired that we should be drawn by His character, not His looks. But we have been told that now He appears with long blonde hair and beard, with suntanned skin and piercing eyes.

***** (Begin Quote)

Revelation 1:

¹² And I [John] turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; ¹³ and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps [the chest] with a golden girdle.

¹⁴ His head [hair] and his hairs [beard] were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire. ¹⁵ And His feet [poking out from His garment] like to fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters [very melodious] . . . ¹⁶ His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength [at noon day]”.

***** (End Quote)

After watching for a while, Nebuchadnezzar called the men, and they, being obedient servants of their earthly ruler, farewelled their Saviour and came out. How they must have wished they could have stayed longer!

***** (Begin Quote)

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²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, and said, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the

