

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Idol

Daniel 3

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Because God is omnipotent, He is able glorify Himself by either completely rescuing His servants or enabling them to fearlessly face death.

I. Nebuchadnezzar pridefully set up a golden statue of himself (or his God) as a test of loyalty for his officials. (v. 1-3)

II. Nebuchadnezzar demanded that all people bow and worship the idol he had created and nearly all complied. (v. 4-7)

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1:21-23a, 25)

III. Daniel's three friends ignored the command and refused to worship the idol. (v. 8-12)

See how your enemies growl,

how your foes rear their heads.

With cunning they conspire against your people;

they plot against those you cherish.

“Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation,

so that Israel's name is remembered no more.” (Psalm 83:2-4)

IV. Though Nebuchadnezzar had been impressed with Yahweh's knowledge, he did not respect His power. (v. 13-15)

As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly. (Proverbs 26:11)

V. The three young Hebrews believed God would either save them or reward them in death. (v. 16-18)

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:6-8)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18)

Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! (Acts 5:29)

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:28-33)

VI. Nebuchadnezzar’s rage at this defiance was as hot as the furnace into which he had the three thrown. (v. 19-23)

But now, this is what the LORD says—

he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...

Do not be afraid, for I am with you... (Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5a)

VII. Nebuchadnezzar was shocked to see an angel of the Lord in the fire with the three, protecting them. (v. 24-25)

There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. (Hebrews 11:36b-38)

VIII. Yahweh chose to display His superior power by utterly delivering His servants from the fire. (v. 26-27)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:3-7)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. (1 Peter 4:12-16)

IX. Nebuchadnezzar was further impressed with the God of the Hebrews, yet still not ready to acknowledge Him as Lord. (v. 28-29)

X. God further blessed the three for their faithfulness to Him. (v. 30)

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good... (Genesis 50:20a)

For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.

You let people ride over our heads;

we went through fire and water,

but you brought us to a place of abundance. (Psalm 66:10-12)