

The Historical Aspects of Daniel (chs. 1-6)

I. THE TIMES AND EVENTS THROUGH THE REIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR, (chs. 1-4)

- A. Nebuchadnezzar moves upon God’s nation, (1:1-7)
- B. Daniel resolves not to defile himself, (8-13)
- C. God promotes Daniel and his three friends, (17-21)
- D. Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a great image, (2:1-49)

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- E. Nebuchadnezzar sets up a golden image, (3:1-30)
  - 1. *The institution of the image, (1-7)*

 INTERPRETATION:

<sup>1</sup> (About three to fifteen years later) **Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold,<sup>1</sup> whose height was sixty cubits (90 feet), and its width six cubits, (9 feet).<sup>2</sup> He set it up in the plain of Dura** (possibly Toul Dura about six miles south of ancient Babylon), **in the province of Babylon.**

<sup>2</sup> **And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps** (princes), **the administrators, the governors,**

NOTES:

 COMMENTARY:

<sup>1</sup> Whereas only the head of the image in the dream was made of gold, Nebuchadnezzar had this image made entirely of gold. This was an expression of rebellion against God's revelation. Through this image of gold the king was saying: "I don't care what the God of heaven has said. My kingdom of Babylon will not fall to another Gentile kingdom. It will rule throughout the times of the Gentiles," (Showers, *The Most High God*, p. 30).

<sup>2</sup> Probably the image was in human form (though not necessarily an image of Nebuchadnezzar) overlaid with gold, rather than solid gold (Isa. 40:19). It was 90 feet by 9 feet, probably including a pedestal, (Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1311).

In the construction of this image, however, even unknown to the king and the builders, there is a revelation by God of man's total failure. The image had the number six stamped upon it. It was sixty cubits high and six cubits wide. The number six in the Bible is the number of man. It was on the sixth day that God created man. Six is the number of man's failure. Man never quite gets there. Six comes short of seven, the number of divine perfection. Man is always a little bit short.

The image in the Old Testament is a preview of one revealed in the New Testament. Revelation 13 predicts that at the end time the antichrist will construct an image. It will be an image to Mr. Trinity of Failure himself, the man whose mystical number is 666.

Man is a failure. We cannot reach up to God, but He has reached down to us. The Lord Jesus, God's perfect man, came and died on a cross that we might be saved, (Phillips and Vine, *Daniel*, p. 50).

**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.**

**So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together (on the appointed day), for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

**Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,**

**"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 (fall prostrate before), and worship (recognize and pay homage to), the gold image (as a great god), that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up (established, appointed, installed);"**<sup>3</sup>

**"and whoever (without exception), does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately (promptly and without hesitation), into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."**<sup>4</sup>

**So (after hearing the kings command and threat), 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 (pronto), and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

## F APPLICATION:

### **(1-7) Dictatorial Ruler**

The leaders were given no choice as to whether they wanted to go to the dedication of the image or worship it or not. This is Nebuchadnezzar's project! It is something that he aspires to develop and propagate. And since it is something he wants so badly, he expects everyone to conform to his desires.

### **NOTES:**

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<sup>3</sup> ***Unification of Religion.*** The image was also to be an object of worship. This was a skillful move on the part of a king who was trying to consolidate his empire and unify its many provinces politically. He understood that one of the best ways to unite people politically is to unite them religiously. It was mandated politically that all persons were to fall down and worship this golden image.

This, too, points us to the last days. When the image of the antichrist is set up in the end time, it will be as an object of worship. The entire world will be required to worship it. There will be a one-world religion. Tyrannical government always wants to make religion a tool of the state, (Phillips and Vine, *Daniel*, pp. 50, 51).

<sup>4</sup> The kings of Babylon were noted for roasting alive people who disobeyed their commands (Jer. 29:22), (Showers, *The Most High God*, p.30).

Very few of us will ever be in national, state or even county seats of power, but – we all have some area or areas of power. For example: the parent is over the child, the employer is over the employee, the

foreman or superintendent is over a division, the committee chairperson is over the committee members, the person with more job seniority is over the one with less, the teacher is over the student, the class president is over the student body, the older brother or sister may lord it over the younger, etc.. Do we not at times when we have great aspirations concerning some matter, unnecessarily expect everyone around us to be just excited about our desires and fall into step with them? Can we not be just as dictative and give others no choice as to how they will fit into our plans when genuine options exist?

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## 2. *The accusation concerning the image, (8-12)*

### INTERPRETATION:

- <sup>8</sup> **Therefore at that time** (following the time of designated worship), **certain Chaldeans came forward, and accused** (lit. *“they ate the pieces of”* – we might say, “They chewed them up one side and down the other and then spit them out”), **the Jews** (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-ego).
- <sup>9</sup> **They spoke** (promptly ran to the king to accuse the Jews [cp., Rev. 12:10] and addressed him), **and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever!”**
- <sup>10</sup> **“You, O king, have made a decree that everyone** (without exception), **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;**
- <sup>11</sup> **“and** (not only that but also decreed that), **whoever** (without exception), **does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace,** (like the cat toying with the mouse before he kills and eats it).
- <sup>12</sup> **“There are certain Jews** (a remnant [not conformed]), **whom you** (which could either imply some indiscretion on the king’s part in which would necessitate him saving face somehow [or] implying that the king gave such a high honor to these Jews only to receive treason in gratitude), **have set over the affairs of** (such an important position as), **the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego; these** (powerful, influential and honored), **men, O king, have not paid due regard to you,** (they paid absolutely no attention to you and your decree – they dishonor you to your face [this was a lie]). **They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up,”** (they publicly dishonor your gods – [this was a truth]).

### NOTES:

### F APPLICATION:

#### (8-12) Jealous Leaders

- When someone or a group, is forced into doing something that they do not like, and they see a few that aren’t doing it, the

whining soon follows. How many times has a sibling said, “How come Johnny or Mary can \_\_\_\_\_ and I can’t?!” or “How come I have to \_\_\_\_\_ and Johnny or Mary don’t?!” We not only want our rights, but we want to be the judge on what is fair and what isn’t. Rather than accepting our lot as divinely appropriated, keeping our jealous eyes at home and upon ourselves, and disciplining our mind to maintain humble subjection; we allow external elements to dominate our internal souls. Thus we succumb to the enemies of bitterness, envy, jealousy, wrath, anger, etc.. The result is not the healthy, determined, conscious development of ourselves, but the destructive, systematic, premeditative of the tearing down of others. We so often are defeated by our own worst enemy - ourselves.

- How quickly the Chaldeans forget that if it were not for Daniel and his three friends, who serve only the God of heaven, they themselves would not be even alive then to complain. It was Daniel who said to Arioch the executioner to stop and, **“Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon!”** These certain Jews are the very people that these certain Chaldeans owed their very lives to. Unfortunately the Chaldeans are not crying out for Nebuchadnezzar to have mercy on them which would only be their reasonable response considering all that the three had done on their behalf. But that is not what they do, they are demanding that the king execute them on the spot without any mercy. Before we go too far in condemning the ungrateful Chaldeans, how well do we as believers show our gratefulness for Christ saving us from certain eternal destruction? The apostle Paul says that it is only reasonable that we would willingly, eagerly, and completely offer ourselves as living sacrifices for our Master’s use, (Rom. 12:1). Daniel did this and his three friends are doing this. Who are we more like; the self-centered Chaldeans or these certain God-centered Jews?

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### 3. *The interrogation about the image, (13-15)*

#### INTERPRETATION:

<sup>13</sup> **Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury** (became intensely angry being defied in this way [the accomplishment of the Chaldean’s goal]), **gave the command** (to his guards), **to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego. So they brought these men before the king.**

#### NOTES:

<sup>14</sup> **Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true,** (did you understand the decree, maybe you were confused), **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego,** (is it true), **that you do not serve my gods**

**or worship the gold image which I have set up?”<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>15</sup> **“Now if you are ready** (if you want everything to go well with you – if you want to correct your mistake), **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** (so help me), **you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver** (rescue, save), **you from my hands?”** (what god or whose god can stop me)<sup>6</sup>

## F APPLICATION:

### (13-15) Disgruntled Ruler

Nebuchadnezzar had the image built, had it placed, had the leaders come, had them worship the image, and now he becomes upset because three men out of the multitude don't follow his orders to the tee. Power struggles are inevitable when we think that the whole world revolves around us, (our talents, positions, ideas, etc.). This power struggle is a sign of weakness and immaturity in Nebuchadnezzar. For one to truly believe that he or she has an edge over most others (e.g., has the best ideas, is the most proficient at tasks, achieves the greatest results, etc.), is setting themselves up for a frustrating, competitive, and lonely life. Good friendships will be cut short. Unfulfilled expectations will consistently leave you discouraged. The joys and satisfaction of achievement will be short lived. You will find yourself distancing yourself from others as well as others distancing themselves from you.

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#### 4. *The affirmation towards the image, (16-18)*

## INTERPRETATION:

<sup>16</sup> **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to**

### NOTES:

## COMMENTARY:

<sup>5</sup> It is not only interesting that the king gives the three an opportunity to defend themselves but the king also does not bring up the first charge concerning their regard for him. The Chaldeans now see that they did not totally meet their goal as the king automatically drops one of charge and now provides a way to escape the others.

<sup>6</sup> Their evident trust in their God sealed his determination to make them realize that no god existed who could deliver from his hand, (Wood, *Daniel*, p. 88).

(hesitantly, cautiously, craftily),  
**answer you in this matter.**<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> They were not saying, “We don't have to tell you anything.” Instead, they were admitting that the charge against them was true; therefore no defense or apology needed to be made, (Showers, *The Most High God*, pp. 32, 33).

<sup>17</sup> “**If that is the case** (you are determined to throw us into the furnace because we are not going to bow our knee to any other than to the God of heaven), **our God whom we serve is able** (capable), **to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king,** (either from death or in death [cp. 2 Tim. 4:16, 17]).

<sup>18</sup> “**But if not** (even though the God we serve in heaven *is able* to deliver us, we know that He may not find *it best* to deliver us. Even so), **let it be known to you** (know for certain, have no misconceptions), **O king, that** (for a truth, as it has been testified against us), **we do not** (nor will we ever), **serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.**”<sup>8</sup>

## F APPLICATION:

### (16-18) Distinguished Leaders

Men who acknowledge and live in accordance to some absolutes will always stand out in a crowd. Men and women who stand alone need not take time, nor be careful in their response as to their decisions in black and white situations. The reason for their resoluteness is that their mind was made up as to what they would do long before the situation ever arose. They had purposed in their heart to live by certain absolute principles derived from God’s Word. There was no decision to make at the fiery furnace, it had already been well thought out and decided a long time ago. The reason people attack and harass those who live by absolutes is that they know they cannot be persuaded, therefore they must be exterminated. Occasionally the physical extermination is sought as was the case here in Daniel, in the communist and some socialist worlds today, and will be in the end times. Occasionally the extermination comes in the form of destroying one’s means or one’s integrity as to propagate one’s thoughts and beliefs or a following. People of absolutes have been in the past, are today and will be in the future, a threat and a menace to the personal selfish ever fluctuating aspirations of the many. ***Those who stand alone are:***

- always the minority
- always in the conspicuous limelight
- always on the political hot seat
- always challenged by others as well as by their own convictions

### NOTES:

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<sup>8</sup> Two matters stand out for notice. First, the young men recognized that God’s will might be different from what they would find pleasant, and they were willing to have it so, without complaining. Too often Christians are not willing to have God’s will different from their own, and then do complain most vigorously when it proves to be that way. Second, they did not make their own obedience contingent upon God’s doing that which was pleasant to them. They were ready to obey, whether God chose to deliver them from the furnace or not. In other words, they found their object of affection in God Himself, not in what God did for them, (Wood, *Daniel*, p. 89).

- always the ones who most significantly impact the world around them
- always the ones who are the most at peace with themselves and their God

- always the ones who are the most ready and excited to go home

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### 5. *The execution because of the image, (19-23)*

#### INTERPRETATION:

<sup>19</sup> **Then** (as the king stood helpless in the presence of these men, with their holy separation and determination, born of their faith), **Nebuchadnezzar was full of** (completely dominated by, controlled by), **fury, and the expression on his face changed** (contorted with emotion [e.g., purple face and veins bulging, emotion flashing from the eyes and thundering horrifying orders from the mouth]), **toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.**<sup>9</sup>

<sup>20</sup> **And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army** (trying to make the penalty for disobedience as terrifying as he could devise and to make sure no god could deliver them from his hand), **to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego,** (making sure they themselves could not escape), **and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.**

<sup>21</sup> **Then** (because of the king's urgency), **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.**

<sup>22</sup> **Therefore, because the king's command was urgent** (sharp, no thought given to the various consequences of his decisions), **and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego,** (causing the needless loss of some superior men).

<sup>23</sup> **And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Ego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

#### F APPLICATION:

##### (19-22) Wrathful Ruler

- When a dictator cannot have his way, a tantrum is generally par to course. The king we see, functions by the same principles that govern his wise men. The principles of "*Me First*," "*Me Now*," and

#### NOTES:

#### COMMENTARY:

<sup>9</sup> Passion overdoes and defeats its own end, for the hotter the fire the sooner were they likely to be put out of pain, (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *A Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 398)

"*Me Always*," is of utmost importance. These kinds of people are driven to fill a bottomless pit of selfish, lustful, non-negotiable ambitions. These kinds of people have been, are today and will be tomorrow - **us** - when we are the focus of our life and not God and

His sovereign will. These kinds of people are us when we see ourselves not as servants, but masters – not masters of the universe, but certainly masters of our lives, relationships and assets.

- When a dictator falls into a tantrum, gross injustice and senseless consequences are a typical by-product. Heads roll when dictators control. How many times have we disciplined our children in anger? How many times have we riddled our spouses in anger? How many times have we been reprimanded by an employer in anger? How many times have we felt the wrath of an angry friend? How many times has the result of such an encounter ended in gross injustice and senseless consequences? This is not the first time we see Nebuchadnezzar commit such a crime. How often do we knowingly commit such crimes?

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6. *The preservation in spite of the image, (24-25)*

 INTERPRETATION:

<sup>24</sup> **Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished** (startled, alarmed); **and he rose** (from his position and approached closer to the furnace), **in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors** (correct me if I am wrong but), **“Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”**

<sup>25</sup> (Then I am not seeing things nor am I going crazy), **“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose** (and all unbound and casually, nonchalantly), **walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt** (not consumed or in any pain), **and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God,”** (some angel or deity).<sup>10</sup>

NOTES:

 COMMENTARY:

<sup>10</sup> There are two possibilities concerning the actual identity of this one: he is either an angel sent by God or the second person of the Godhead in a pre-incarnate appearance. . . the likelihood lies with the second suggestion. Christ in similar form had appeared as the Angel of Yahweh to Abraham at Mamre (Gen. 18 ), later to Joshua as the "captain of the host of Yahweh" (Josh. 5:13-6:5), and at various times to others. This story affords one of the most meaningful illustrations in the Bible of God's tender care for His children. . . God had permitted the men to be cast into the horrifying furnace, but in doing so He had literally gone in with them. What a great blessing this was for the men; what a wonderful comfort it was at the time; and what a precious memory it must have provided for all the rest of their lives! (Wood, *Daniel*, p. 94)

Someday the entire nation of Israel will enter into its “furnace of blazing fire” (i.e., the Great Tribulation), and God’s power to bring His own through that time of trial will be obvious to all (Isa. 4:3-5), (Whitcomb, *Daniel*, pp. 59, 60).

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7. *The interrogation as a result of the image, (26-27)*

 INTERPRETATION:





**F APPLICATION:**

**(28-30) Honored Leaders**

- **Honored by their God** - Physical reunion (Christ with his saints), and physical salvation is witnessed as well. When we face death we need not fear what man can do to us for our Lord will be close at hand to receive us to Himself, (to physically deliver or bring home). There will be an eternal reunion as well when every believer dies, which is not physically seen, but is every bit as real and astonishing. We must not forget this when illness, threat, loss, or some other life threatening situation arises. We can be every bit as bold and confident as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- **Honoring to their God** - The image is dealt a mortal blow and thus removed from its pedestal and God takes His rightful place over it. II Corinthians 10:4 tells us, ***“For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing in captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”*** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed it, and thus instituted it; do we as well?
- **God rules over rulers in order to get the glory.** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made it obvious that God not only ruled over their lives, but Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom and all other kingdoms as well. How many of us who profess salvation through and allegiance to Jesus Christ, even accomplish the first factor that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego proved; that God ruled over their lives? Their example was obvious, is ours? Satan and evil men tried to destroy God’s servants, but God sustains them, delivers them and promotes them. Had the evil men said nothing about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego not bowing to the image, there would have been no change in the position of the three or elevation of their God. So often, even as believers, we misinterpret our circumstances and situations in our daily lives and throw away tremendous opportunities of blessings. Just like someone who throws away an antique and never realizes it until he sees one sold at an auction for \$ 300,000.00! It is only after the opportunity is lost do we see how foolish we were and instead of blessing we are filled with heartache and disappointment. We must “redeem the times” and “be not unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

**NOTES:**

- God humbles the proud and exalts the humble. As pride comes before a fall so must humility come before honor. In Luke 18 the Pharisee thanked God that in his own eyes, he was above many of the other people of his society, but the tax collector simply said with head bowed, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” When Jesus gives His final

comments concerning these two men, we see that the proud are humbled and the humble are exalted. Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character.

### **NEBUCHADNEZZAR – ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE NATURAL MAN**

1. He labors to glorify himself (3:1)
2. He confesses God (2:47) and yet retains his favorite idols (3:1)
3. He loves an showy display of outward glory (3:1ff)
4. He remains innately and incurably religious (3:26ff)
5. He possesses some virtues (3:14)
6. He shows intolerance for the true worshipers of God (3:15)
7. He takes personal offense when others do not participate in his religious observances or when others question and disapprove of his religious principles (3:14)
8. In rage he initiates intense persecution against the godly (3:19ff)
9. He reacts in surprise and disbelief to anything supernatural (3:24).
10. He finds himself forced to acknowledge the supremacy of God's power (3:26) and the submissiveness of God's people (3:29).
11. They are sometimes used of God to pass legislation that preserves, protects, and even promotes the people of God (3:29).

*---Dr. John L. Benson*

### **PARALLELS BETWEEN DANIEL 3 AND TRIBULATION CIRCUMSTANCES**

1. The erection of an image for the purpose of worshiping it (3:1-6)
2. The repetition of the number six (3:1, 10)
3. The introduction of unified, idolatrous worship by the command of the state (3:3-5)
4. The response of the mass of Gentiles to the command to engage in emperor worship (3:7)
5. The response of a remnant of Jews to the command (3:8-18)
6. The indignation of the dictator whom the Jews defied (3:19)
7. The intensity of the persecution – intensified seven times (3:19)
8. The fire that killed their enemies does not harm the Jews (3:22, [see Isaiah 43:2])
9. The preservation of the remnant of Jews causes the Gentiles to glorify God (3:24)
10. The universal proclamation of peace and the recognition of God's greatness after the ordeal ends (3:29)
11. A judgment upon those who dishonor the God of the Jews (3:29)
12. The promotion of Jews to legislative positions in the government; the increase of their influence over the Gentiles (3:20)

*---Dr. John L. Benson*

### **NOTES:**