

Daniel 3:1-7

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits[fn] and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Not read-

Daniel 3:8–18 (ESV)

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king.

When the world makes you choose

We talked last week about the powerlessness of ourselves to decide for God. We talked about how it is a miracle if God changes a person's heart, if he wakes up a spiritually dead person.

We see that King Nebuchadnezzar heard the right message. He drew the right conclusion. He said the right words. But it did him no spiritual good. Facts do not save a person. Christ does. If the Holy Spirit does not empower the gospel in a person's life, that person's decisions will never result in salvation, no matter how accurate or sincere they are.

King Nebuchadnezzar had said this to Daniel. **"Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."** And the tragedy is that he may have well also said, **"but I will never bow my heart to him."**

What we see this morning should not surprise us.

Here is that same king in verse 1 of our text.

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold

We will learn later what it is for. This image represents the king's gods, his **powerless** gods that could not reveal the **king's own dream**. It is likely that bowing down to the idol would have been both bowing to the king **and** his gods. Now remember the statue that the king saw in his dream. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. But there were a bunch of **"after this"** kingdoms.

It is very likely that, after the king had time to think about this, in his selfish pride, he rejected the **whole idea** that the **Jewish God was truly in charge**. The statue he had made was **very different** than the one he saw in his dream. It was **all** gold. It was as if to say, **my kingdom will remain**. It will be **my kingdom** that will fill the earth. It was very likely a statement of rebellion against the one true God.

Notice too where it was placed.

He set it up on the plain of Dura

From what I read, many think that is where the tower of Babel was first built. And remember what that tower was for.

Gen 11: 1-9 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. **2** And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3** And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. **4** Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." **5** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. **6** And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. **7** Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they

may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

The tower was being built as a tribute to humankind and to consolidate humankind. It was man's attempt to replace God with themselves. It was humanism in its purist form. And God confused it and scattered humans across the globe.

Now, what do you think the **devil's** will is for the world? This is what he has always wanted. He does not care so much if he is **not worshipped**, as long as God is **not** worshipped. Any substitute will do.

So he inspires King Nebuchadnezzar through the world, or the flesh, or by direct influence, to repeat the rebellion.

And the king makes a statue in honor of his gods, and probably himself.

It is 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. The proportions of that statue would have been very odd unless there was a platform that raised up part of the distance and the statue sat on top of it.

Now keep in mind this statue is on a plane, a very flat piece of land. Have you ever noticed how far you can see out into the ocean or across a lake? Well this statue would have been visible for miles. And being made out of gold it would shine like a light when the sun hit it. This was by design. The king was aware of how magnificent and impressive this would be.

Then look who he compels to be there?

2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

I don't want to go through each position that is being mentioned here. Some are unclear. And I don't think that is the point. The point is that everyone in a position of leadership, (except maybe Daniel for some unknown reason) was required to be there. And this was not limited to Babylon. These people would

have had to travel great distances. Every land that Babylon conquered had some form of leadership. And most everyone was there.

A corporation only does that when they want to accomplish something **very significant**. There is a great deal of money and time spent in something like this. We see this was a **top priority** for the king. I believe he wanted everyone in the whole kingdom to understand that **everyone everywhere** was to worship at the feet of the king. He wanted their top allegiance to be to him and his gods. Every other thing had to be subservient to that. When these people were sent home, it would be with the mandate that everyone is to worship the ruler of the kingdom. He had to have the highest allegiance in everyone's life.

Other gods could be worshipped. As long as the king reigned supreme. That was the message.

So while the **tower of Babel** had all people together in their worship of man and God disbursed them. Now **the king** is bringing all people **back together** under the worship of man.

Naturally that is not something that God will allow forever. God in a dream had set up an image. The image **God created** in the king's mind **reflected the truth** and, in the end, **displayed the glory of God**. In our text it says that this is an image **that Nebuchadnezzar set up**. And that wording is significant. It is set up by man to glorify man.

4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."

I am not going to go in depth on the instruments used. Many of those are uncertain. But I think we can assume that the sound that would issue forth would be **impressive**. It was going to be a once in a lifetime experience. The air waves would be filled with beautiful and awe inspiring sound. The experience itself would be worshipful.

This is a principle. You will find it lots of places. The world will inevitably demand that **you worship** what **they worship** if you want to enjoy the fruits that they enjoy. And it makes perfect sense. The devil is given lots of leeway in his limited rule on this planet. And he hates God. So everything he does is to accomplish the goal of harming God with his limited powers. Our highest purpose is to glorify God. That makes the devil's highest goal to have humans to dishonor God.

Maybe nothing dishonors God more than the worship of something else. Idolatry has always been repugnant to God. It is offensive to God and destructive to us. Well here King Nebuchadnezzar **demands it** on the threat of death.

I was reading a commentary that I thought really captured the issue. We are not facing a statue that we are forced to bow in worship to. But the principle still remains. The world is making us choose. Here is the quote.

I have also come to see that the same battle is actually being fought out daily in my heart over much lesser issues. Am I going to declare the Lord to be my God, my primary allegiance, come what may, or will I bow down to the multitude of glittering idols that the world presents to me? These idols are not physical statues in our setting, of course. They are the various pleasures, the desires, and the attitudes that society tells me I need to have if I am to be fulfilled and lead a worthwhile life. They promise to bless me if I will bow down to them, but to curse me and ruin my life if I fail to meet their demands.

For some, the golden image is the respect and admiration of others. As young people, we often feel the pressure to be one of the “in-crowd” at school, even though the cost of admission to this club is that we mustn’t show respect for our parents, or talk about God, or keep ourselves mentally and physically pure until marriage. “Bow down to me,” the image says, “or I will throw you into the fiery furnace of the mockery and ridicule of your peers.” This idolatry was described by C. S. Lewis as the allure of “The Inner Ring,” the desire to be on the right side of an invisible line that divides “insiders” from “outsiders.” Indeed, the power of this idol is such that, in the opinion of Lewis, “of all the passions, the passion for the Inner Ring is most skillful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things.”

Iain M. Duguid, Daniel, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 53–54.

I believe it will not be long before people in upper management at corporations will be required to bow at the alter of the woke agenda in order to get or keep their jobs. This is a real world example that is similar to the worship King Nebuchadnezzar required. But it is even more subtle than that. Often much more **subtle** and **pervasive**.

Like CS Lewis said, think about people you want to be liked by. People you want to be accepted by. Young people especially, watch what you do and say when there is a new person to impress. Watch yourself closely. What do you do to impress them? It is often disheartening what happens with young people when a

new person is added to their circles. Sometimes it brings out Christ in a young person. But more often it brings out flesh.

What we are watching for here is compromise.

Compromise is when you go against what you know or sense is right, because you want something else so badly. Sometimes you want to avoid rejection and harm. Sometimes you want acceptance and approval.

Will you show disrespect to your parents to impress someone?

Will you allow people to be made fun of and hurt when you are in a group?

Will you stop caring about the least popular people being left out of your group?

And as we get older it does not get easier.

What have we **done**, or what are tempted **to do** to win acceptance and approval of a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a spouse, our children, an employer, a clique at work? It can be **ANY** social group we are in? The world will push for our worship. It will demand compromise. That is the nature of the world.

Christ alone is worthy of our worship. But if we are not careful we will find ourselves worshipping at the world's alters.

7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard music (the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music,) all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

There is no surprise here. We should never be surprised when the world worships at its own temples. And that is what we see here.

In this case it seems that **everyone** appeared to think it better to **worship** than to **die**. But that is not **always** the case, even for those of this world. There are people who do not follow Christ who value principles more than their lives. And they will not violate them. We should thank God this is true. Sometimes the world shows a great deal of nobility. They may value freedom. They may value honor. That, too, makes them uncompromising. We need to think accurately about this. While no one is good intrinsically, many do have noble traits. Many are kinder and more principled than we are. But those traits do not consist of a worship of God, a love for God above all else. Sticking to a principle at the cost of one's life is different than choosing to worship God first and only.

Note too that it says "**all the peoples fell down**". Just one more example of how careful we must be with the word "all". It looks like all is referring to this great throng of people. But we know it did not include the three Hebrew children.

We are going to go further in our text today even though we did not read it earlier.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.

When we choose not to worship at the alter of the world, that will often **not go unnoticed**. It will draw attention. I think of Tim Tebow's testimony and how he was treated. He made a quiet stand and got attacked from all sides. There is nothing unusual about this.

Remember that the Chaldeans were the home team in the Mystical Division. Daniel had saved them from death and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were part of that salvation. We might think the Chaldeans would be **grateful**. But no. Gratitude is not a driving factor in politics. They were not grateful. They were probably envious. They held malice toward the Hebrews. The Chaldeans wanted to see the Jewish team suffer.

The problem is, in this case, they had evidence. The Jewish team was guilty of violating the King's rules.

First the Chaldeans quoted the rule to the king. Then they spill the beans.

12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

When you are trying to get someone in trouble, how do you do it? Does one of your kids ever tell on another kid by saying, "I am not real sure my brother intended to take the cookie. In fact, he may not have known it was a cookie or he may not have known about the rule. But I felt inclined to let you know because I love you so much, that my brother took the cookie. I cannot tell why. I thought you would want to know."

Nah that never happens. This is what happens.

"Mom I watched and my brother waited until your back was turned and he snuck that cookie and he thought he could get away with it."

The crime gets reported with the insinuation that there was motive behind it. It was an absolute disregard of your authority.

That is how the Chaldeans report the crime.

These men pay no attention to you.

There is probably **no truth** to that statement. I bet the fact that the king gave his death sentence on this action had their **full attention**. **Attention** was not the issue. **Respect** was not the issue. **Proper regard** was not the issue. The issue was one **of worship**. They probably wanted to do what the king asked **in one way**, but

they were **not allowed to** by their God. And they were not going to dishonor their God.

Then the Chaldeans get to their point. **11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace.**

This was the end goal of the Chaldeans malicious intent. While Daniel would not allow these same people to be put to death when Daniel had the chance, the same would never be true about the Chaldeans. Their envy and hatred had no boundaries.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king.

Have you ever made decisions in a furious rage?

Are you proud of what you said or did?

Wisdom chooses to delay what one says or does in that state. It is very rare that we **do or say wise things** in a state of rage, especially when our pride is involved. The Chaldeans hit upon the King's weakness. It was pride. We will see this later when it costs the King his sanity.

Here we see his pride alive and well.

I don't want to go any further into the story today. We are approaching the **action parts** and I don't want to do an injustice to it by splitting it up.

We are about to see how **costly** this uncontrolled rage of the king was to him.

We will see what it looks like when people choose **not** to compromise.

We will see how to speak of God when we are **not sure** what He will do.

And we will see just how far God will go when **He wants to make His name known.**

And that is just the start.

So the application for this week might be to take a good hard look at our lives in social settings. How much are we willing to spend to get those things we most want or to avoid those things we least want?

Is there any way that we compromise our worship of God when we are serving in our secular world?

What would we say if the choice was between our lives or the lives of our loved ones and worship to a foreign god, of any kind?

Well next week, Lord willing, we will see what happens when the Jewish team makes the right choice.