

# **Daniel 3: Fired Up**

## **Standing Firm with God series**

### **by Bill Aumack**

We're in week three of our Daniel series. I hope you've been enjoying this series, and now I have. But before we dive into chapter three, let's do a quick recap. So, chapter 1, we had Daniel and his friends, and they do the test with the food, right? Big test.

We also looked a little bit at Daniel 6, which is Daniel and the lion's den. A lot of similarities there with a test of faith. And then last week in Daniel 2, we talked about Nebuchadnezzar, and he had a dream, but he forgot his dream, and he needed somebody to tell him what the dream was. And to tell him what the dream meant. And none of the wise men or the astrologers could do it. They were all going to be put to death. Daniel asks for more time. And God gives Daniel the meaning to the dream, and he tells Nebuchadnezzar, I want you to open your Bibles to Daniel chapter 2. Cause we're gonna start at the very end of Daniel 2 and look at what King Nebuchadnezzar does at the end after Daniel tells him the meaning of this dream. So we're in Daniel chapter 2, verse 46.

Give me an amen when you get there. I still hear a few pages turning. Not as many pages turning now because we turn them digitally, and I can't hear when you guys get there.

All right. Daniel 2:46. Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and an incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, surely your God is the God of gods and the lord of Kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery, and Daniel and his friends are promoted. Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire providence of Babylon and placed him in charge of all the wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request, that king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abedigo administrators over the providence of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained in the royal court.

So how does the king respond to this interpretation of his dream? Favorably, very lavishly. Right. Promotions for everybody. I wish my boss gave me a promotion every time I did something good. Right? That'd be great.

So a lot happens there, and then we dive right into chapter 3. And chapter 3 is the fiery furnace. Now, how many of you have heard the story of the fiery furnace? Let me see your hands. If you're online, put heard it in the chat or on the comments. Like 100% of us. This is like one of the top stories in the Bible, right? Everybody knows David, Goliath, Noah and the fiery furnace, right? I mean, those are just like top stories in the Bible, and we've all heard it.

How many of you know what the statue, the image was a statue, what that represented? Raise your hands if you think you know what that was. Okay? How many of you know why Nebuchadnezzar did it? Raise your hands if you know why Nebuchadnezzar did it. How many of you have heard that was a pride thing for Nebuchadnezzar? Okay, now, do you know this or is that what the Bible says? You think that's what the Bible says? We're going to test it today. Okay, we're going to test that today.

Now, one thing to be aware of, we have no idea how much time is between chapter 2 and chapter 3. Many commentaries believe it to be a significant amount of time, maybe 20 years. Okay, number 1, it would take a while to build this statue. We don't know exactly how they constructed it, but you construct something 90ft tall. That's going to take you a while. Okay? And they didn't have cranes and, you know, all the machinery that we have today, so that took a while. Okay?

And, you know, maybe it took a while for the king to dream it up. And then architects had to plan and they had to get an environmental survey, and they had to pick a site and, you know, all the red tape that you have to go through to build something like this, okay? So it takes a while. And we tend to think it was like, you know, chapter two ends on Thursday, and Monday morning, the statue is built, you know, because it just comes right after each other. I want you to remember there's time here. There's a lot of time here. Okay?

So let's look at Daniel 3. Let's start with verses 1-3. It says, king Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, the prefects,

the governors, the advisors, the treasures, the Judges, the magistrates, and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the advisors, the treasures, the Judges, the magistrates, and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that the king Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before it.

Now remember, Babylon is not just a city, it's a kingdom, right? And so people have to travel from all over the kingdom to get here. And I imagine there's quite a few people there. This is a large group of people. Okay? And, I mean, you think if California called for all its federal workers to gather at somewhere for a meeting, how many people would be there? A lot. Right? Okay. So, I mean, a lot of people show up for this thing.

Okay, now, the image is 60 cubits tall. 60 cubits is about 90ft. And it's about 9ft wide. Now, the average male that's 6ft tall, to get from 6 to 60. You got to multiply by 15. You knew I was getting math in here somehow. The average adult six foot male is about 17 inches wide at the shoulder. 17 times 15 is 22 and a quarter feet. So if you're a well proportioned statue, you would be 90ft tall and 22ft wide. But this is 90ft tall and 9ft wide. You guys ever played with stretch Armstrong? That's what he looks like, right? All stretched out, kind of distorted, kind of weird looking. Doesn't look like a normal human being would look. And we give Barbie a hard time for her proportions. Right.

So now, does it say in here in Daniel 3:1, what this image looks like? What is this image of? [audience: Gold] Yeah, but what's it look like? Is it a giraffe? Is it a snake? Is it a man? Is it King Nebuchadnezzar? What is it?

It does not say. It does not. It says he put up an image of what it was made of. Gold. It had gold in it, but we don't know what it was an image of. It doesn't say what it was.

Somewhere in the world there's a remote, but it's not with me. So, Alex, can you go forward to the next one? Right. Does it say anywhere that the image looked like King Nebuchadnezzar? No. Now, how many of you know that it looks like King Nebuchadnezzar or it looks like the dream? [handed the remote: Thank you, sir.] It looked like the image in the dream. How many of you knew that before? Now you don't want to raise your hand? Some of you told me you knew what it was. Nowbody... I mean, I've heard that so many times in my life that the image that he

put up was the image from his dream and it looked like him. Now maybe, but the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible doesn't say that.

Okay, and even if it did look like him, when his face is 90ft in the air and all distorted because he's long and skinny, isn't going to look very much like him. Probably not, right? Probably not. By the way, if you look at idols from this time period, this is about 600 BC, they all look like this. They all look tall and skinny and stretched out. And that's why some people say aliens invaded and the people made images of them because they don't look human, because they're all really kind of have these weird proportions. Okay?

Now, I read a whole bunch of commentaries and sermons and messages and all kinds of stuff about this, and I have found all kinds of reasons or what people thought it was. So let's kind of talk about those. But first, let's talk about does it look like Nebuchadnezzar? Because I've always been told that it represented Nebuchadnezzar, and this was an issue of pride and people, he had people come to worship him. Let's think about this critically. Why would you build a statue of yourself 6 miles out of town on a plane, stand over here, put the statue over there, call everybody together and say, bow down to that. Why would you not just stand on the platform and say, everybody bowed down to me if you wanted people to worship you? Furthermore, if it was an image of you, why would you put it 6 miles out of town? I'd put it right by the city gate so everybody could see it. Or better yet, downtown, right next to my palace, where everybody coming and going, hey, there's the king, man, it was great, right? Why would you put it 6 miles out of town? It makes no sense. It makes no sense.

Okay, now, so some people say it's an image of himself. I don't think so. Some people said it's the image of what he dreamed about. The man with the mixed metals in his dream, just covered in gold. Maybe, the Bible doesn't say that. It could be. He would be really distorted. So every picture you've seen of him looking like a big, strong male is wrong because he would look like stretch Armstrong. And why would Nebuchadnezzar build an image and kind of diss the God that gave him the meaning of that dream when he was so pro about that God after the dream? That seems kind of weird, too. That seems kind of weird to me. Some people think that maybe this was an image of the God in heaven and he was trying to worship the God in heaven. King Nebuchadnezzar has not read the Old

Testament. He doesn't know that you're not supposed to make graven images. He wants to honor the God that gave him this dream and the mysteries behind it. And he does what he knows how to do. He makes an idol. Maybe. Maybe. But I don't know if, as we go on and read some more here, I'm not sure that that's a good answer, but that would perfectly explain why Daniel is not there. Because we always ask the question, how come Daniel wasn't here? Well, Daniel wouldn't have to come to worship the God he already worships. Right? And if he's called, we would say, well, Daniel was out of town, King's business, out of town. He called every official from all over the whole kingdom to come. And the man who's in charge of all the wise men he sends out of town on King's business. Really? Who would do that? Who would have the most important meeting that you had to call people from all over the country to come and send your top guy out of town? Right. That makes no sense. That makes no sense. All right. And if you think it was a representation of the image of, like I said, the image in his dream, then he's kind of dissing the God above him.

We don't know what it is, but I think it's important to admit that we don't know what it is. Because sometimes as Christians, we get kind of, it's this way. Better be this way. You're not doing it this way, you're doing it wrong. Anybody ever tell you that? Not only not necessarily Christian stuff, maybe at work you're supposed to do it this way. You don't do it this way... My dad's favorite saying growing up, and I swear I've heard this a million times. And we say it's an exaggeration. I don't think it is. Heard this a million times. If you don't have time to do it right the first time, when are you going to have time to fix it right? You're not doing it this way, you're doing it wrong. Do it right. We hear that all the time, and Christians, we do that. We say the image was this and it means this and it's this. And the Bible doesn't say that. Okay?

Now we're allowed to try and interpret and try and guess and try and figure out that's all good. We should do those things, but we should be careful to admit that the Bible doesn't say that. That's our best guess. We don't even know what happened to the image. It was there and it never seems to get mentioned again. We don't know who took it down. We don't know where it went. We don't know. We can't find it. In archaeological digs, we know where the plain of Dura is. We found the fiery furnaces, can't find the image. Somebody probably wanted the gold. Okay.

All right. Now, some people have also said that this was not an act of worship, that this is more like saluting the flag, right? We get together, everybody, and we're going to have a big meeting and try and get everybody headed the same direction. So, you know, salute the flag and let's all carry on, right? Except when they get ready to start, the Herald cries out, look with me. In verse 6, he tells them exactly what's going to happen. Remember, King Nebuchadnezzar says, you know, the band's going to play and you're supposed to bow down and listen to what the Herald says. Verse 6, whoever does not fall down and worship. And what? And worship. Does that sound like a salute the flag? No. Whoever falls down and does not worship will be immediately thrown into the blazing furnace. Great.

Now, we don't know how the statue was constructed. It might have been metal on the inside and then just covered with gold. It's unlikely it was solid gold. I mean, 9ft wide and 90ft tall is a lot of gold. And in all honesty, gold would not be strong enough to support itself on that kind of weight. It would just tip over.

So it had maybe some kind of metal structure with gold on it. Maybe it was made of bricks and then carved and then gold was put on it. We don't know. But they needed the furnaces to fire the bricks to make the metal to do the gold. So the furnaces were there.

Okay, so we know the story, right? The music plays, everybody bows, except who? Shad Rac, me, Shaq and Abednigo. Rack, Shack and Benny, as they're known to their friends. If you ever watched Veggie Tales.

And what happens next? Who comes up to tell him to tell the king? The astrologers, the chaldeans come up to tell right now, how come the king couldn't see that they didn't bow, right? He's standing there, support. I'm imagining he's got a good seat. He can see what's happening, but he doesn't notice that they don't bow down. So the astrologers come up, the Chaldeans. Now, these are the same people that couldn't interpret the dream. And we're going to get all the wise men killed because they couldn't interpret the dream. And when Daniel interprets the dream, that saves their lives. But of course, they get promoted over them and they don't like that. So now here they are coming to tattle to the king. And the kind of, the literal translation of what is said here is to eat the pieces of flesh torn off somebody's body. Right? This is slander. This is gossip. This is tattletailing. Right? There's a way to pass information on to the king that's good for the king.

And there's a way to pass information onto the king that's good for you. This is clearly the latter. This is clearly the latter, right?

And so they've forgotten that Daniel saved them. And of course, now the king is mad. He's called everybody from all over the whole kingdom to come together to try and get everybody on one accord and worship this image. And three yahoos aren't doing it. Now, do you say no to the king? No. Remember, what does the king own? Everything. The king owns the ground and the air and the grass and the cattle. And you're just lucky that he lets you live here for a while. Okay? And so you don't tell the king no. And here, these three guys tell him no.

Well, they bring them up and the king is very gracious to them. He remembers who they are. And he says, maybe you didn't quite understand. You know, you're foreigners. This is your second language. Let me explain it again, right? And they stop him and say, king, they give maybe the most epic response ever.

Look, in verse 16, Daniel 3:16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to him, King Nebuchadnezzar. We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it. And he will deliver us from your majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, your majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

What an epic response. What an epic response. My God will save me, but even if he doesn't, I will not bow.

Now, you ever had somebody say something kind of bad about Christianity when you're standing around? What do we like to do? Oh, I got something to do back over here. I'll see you later, right? We don't want anybody to make fun of us for our beliefs. Right. We don't want anybody to say anything bad about us, and we try to avoid conflict. And avoiding conflict is good, but we, you know, we don't want anybody to make fun of us.

Now, this past week, we had quite a hubbub with the opening of the Olympics. Right. Christians were upset about what was portrayed and what happened. Now, let's be clear. Nobody died. Nobody was threatened to die. No harm came physically to anybody, and we were having fits. Right. And let's be honest, how

well do you think Christians have treated that community? They probably have reasons to hate us, but we make a big stink out of it because we don't like people to make fun of us. Here, these guys are looking certain death in the face because the fiery furnace is right there and it's burning. This is not, well, if we get caught or somebody might do something. If we say no, we go in there. No doubt, no question. And they said, we will not bow. What an epic, epic response!

Is your relationship with God such that you would do something like these three Hebrews did, looking certain death in the face. Right. Because let's be honest, if the king said, you got to bow down, it might be just as easy to go, my shoe's untied. Right. Or, oh, I'll bow down, but I'll pray to Jesus instead of the idol. Right. We find ways to make excuses and get out of it. Right. But not them. Not them.

Okay. Now, I think that the answer that the Hebrews give to the king here is another clue as to what the image might have been, because I don't think it's one of Nebuchadnezzar's regular gods. Now, Nebuchadnezzar had some gods that he worshiped. One primary God was Marduk. Uh, we know about him and his son Nabu. Um, I don't know why Marduk names his son Nabu, but Nabu sounds like a planet from Star Wars that little creatures live on or something. I don't know why that's what I think of when I hear that name. But we have these.... They kept records on these cylinders, clay cylinders, and the scribe would scribe on them, and they're online, and you can go read them because they've translated them to English. And I read one of them, and it is just full of the things that King Nebuchadnezzar did. All the. The conquest, the annexations of this country and building the city walls higher, just all the great things that the king has done. And it often gives credit to his god Marduk. Okay, so one thought is that that image might have been one of King Nebuchadnezzar's regular gods. Marduk, or Nabu, actually one of the other cities outside of the city of Babylon worshiped Nabu, and they would actually bring his statue once a year to Babylon so that the father and son could be together. Wasn't that nice of them? What a wasted effort. Right?

Okay. But that's how serious they were about this. But I think that this kind of shows that it's not one of their regular gods because they said, we will not bow down to your gods or the image you set up. So if that was one of his regular gods, you wouldn't say that. You say, we're not going to bow down to your gods. Right.

So I don't think it was one of his regular gods. Okay, so we'll keep going, see if we get some more clues of what it might be.

So the king gets really angry. I'm running way too late. The king got really angry and he says, you know, heat up the furnace seven times. And I don't know if they could do that or not, but, you know, they started piling the wood on it, making it as hot as they could make it. Now, how many of you have ever cooked on, like, a charcoal grill or a wood fire, whatever, right? If the fire gets cold, how long does it take to get it back up and hot? It takes a while, right? It's not like the gas stove. You. Now it's hotter, right? You've got to pile the wood on, wait for it to burn.

How long do you think it takes to make a fiery furnace seven times hotter? I don't know either. But it's a while, right? You got to load that thing up with fuel and wait for it to get burning and wait for the coals to get hot. More fuel and more coals. And so this whole time that this takes, this may take a couple of hours, right? This is not 15 minutes. This is hours. Everybody's standing there because nobody brought lawn chairs. Right? And if you're one of the crowd of all these government officials, can you leave and go home? Uh uh. Kings's in the mood. I ain't going nowhere. I'm standing right here until he says we can go because I don't want to go into there [points to fiery furnace]. Right. So for hours, everybody stands around. While this gets hotter. Of course he binds him up. He sends the strongest soldiers from the military, and goes to throw them into the fire. Of course, we know that the soldiers die. They expire as they get too close to the heat. What's that got to be like for the Hebrews? You're now a few feet. I'm from, like, me, the Gustavo, away from the furnace. The soldier dies because it's so hot. You look at the other guys and go, we can make a break for it now, right? What do you do? But apparently they just continue walking and go, get in the fire. I would at least have second thoughts about that, right? Maybe God has saved us right here and said, no, you don't have to go, and we can go back, right? That thought would probably enter my head, but they go down and get in the fire.

And of course, the ending is amazing. Verse 24. Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, weren't there three men that we tied up and threw in the fire? They replied, certainly, your majesty. And he said, look, I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed. And the fourth looks like the son of the gods.

Let's talk about the son of the gods. Some versions say the son of God, but in 600 BC, they don't have the same idea of the son of God that we have in modern Christianity. Modern Christianity, who's the son of God? Jesus. In 600 BC. That's not true. There's just God. They don't have a trinity. They don't understand God the father, God the son, God the Holy Ghost. There's just God. And so he would never say the son of God referring to Jesus. That concept does not exist yet. Okay. And he clears it up later when he says he sent an angel. So what he's really referring to is a heavenly being. There's a heavenly being here with us.

Now, here's another question. Do you think the three Hebrews could see the angel? The Bible doesn't say so. You know, maybe, maybe not. What always happens when an angel appears? What does he always say? Don't be afraid. Now, we don't know if the angel appeared to him in the fire and told them, don't be afraid. We don't know. Maybe they never even saw the angel. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar and the people outside could see it, but they couldn't see it. Maybe they could see him. I don't know. Bible doesn't say. Bible doesn't say, but it's kind of fun to think about.

Verse 26. Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, the fire is so loud that you get as close as you can get, and you yell at him, right, because the fire is making so much noise. He shouted, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come here. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. The satraps, prefix governors, royal advisors, crowded around them, and they saw the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair on their head singed. Their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Verse 28. The Nebuchadnezzar said, praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel, didn't send. Jesus sent his angel to rescue his servants. They trusted him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than to serve or worship any God except their own. Now, that probably tells us that that image did not represent their God. Some people said this was an image to the God of heaven, that he tries to make a thing to. It probably was not based on this response.

Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language. Now, the king is really going out here because he's, like, just not my nation, but any nation. Like, he has control over all the nations.

Any nation who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be cut into pieces, their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other God can save this way. And then the king promoted Shadrach. Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

What happens at the end of chapter six, after Daniel and the lion's den? What happens to the people who tried to trick the king and lie to him about Daniel and God? They got fed to the lions, along with their families, their kids, their pet goldfish. Everybody, and probably their houses were turned to rubble because the king said, so right here, okay, you get wiped off the face of the earth. Now, this is another amazing encounter with the God of heaven for Nebuchadnezzar.

And I've heard my whole life, like some of you at the beginning of the service, who won't admit it now, do you know who you are, that this was an issue of pride for Nebuchadnezzar? It's his image, and maybe, I don't know. The Bible does not say. There's opportunities, s. There's different interpretations you could take, and how you interpret it tells you some different things. Okay, but we should be honest about that as Christians and say, we don't know what that image was. It was an image that they were supposed to worship. That's what we know. Who it represented. Who it was, we don't know. Could it have been Nebuchadnezzar and be an issue of pride? Could be. Could it have been the image from his dream? Could be. But the Bible doesn't say that. So just be careful about what you know from what's in the Bible and what you know from what other people say.

I tell you, when I was reading other commentaries, I people would say this was not an act of worship. This is like saluting the flag. And when I read and it says bow down in worship, I'm like, did you read what it says before you wrote your commentary? So, you know, pastor has been, talking about, you know, the C's that we need to take care of and the W's and reading with context. Be careful. Don't just read what somebody tells you. Go back and read what it says in the Bible for yourself. And I went back and read King James and NIV and RSV and ESV and a couple other Vs. They all said the same thing. None of them told me something

that was awe inspiring that the other ones didn't have. They all said pretty much the same thing.

Okay, so just be aware of what we know and what we don't know. What we do know is that God is more powerful than the Kings of the earth, and our God can save, and our God will save. But even if he doesn't, I will not bow.

Are you willing to take a dangerous, potentially life threatening stand for God? It's easy to say yes. It's a lot harder to do when you're looking at the fiery furnace and challenge, work on your relationship with God so that you can say, even if he doesn't save me, I will not bow.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this story. This is such an amazing story, Lord, and it inspires us. And we want to be like those three Hebrews say, I will not bow. Give us the courage to do that, Lord. Give us the courage to answer correctly so that you are represented well, so that you are represented as the kind of loving, gracious God that you are the kind of God who saves. Help us to answer in ways where we answer what's in the Bible, not what we think might have happened, but what the Bible tells us actually happened. Lord, we ask that you be with us, that you keep us safe and you bring us back again in Jesus name. Amen.