

THE KING'S IMAGE (DANIEL 3)

Section Outline (from Mitchell L. Chase in the ESV Expository Commentary Volume 7)

1. The Herald Proclaims a Royal Decree (3:1-7)
 2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Are Accused (3:8-12)
 3. Nebuchadnezzar Is Enraged and Gives Orders (3:13-15)
 4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Declare Resolve (3:16-18)
 - 3'. Nebuchadnezzar Is Enraged and Gives Orders (3:19-23)
 - 2'. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Are Delivered (3:24-27)
- 1'. Nebuchadnezzar Proclaims a Royal Decree (3:28-30)

Setting up the chapter. Shinar served as the site for one of the first human rebellions against God's kingdom. The people refused to fill the earth with YHWH's image; they spoke one language and wanted to congregate to build a city and a tower to secure themselves and honor of their own name. Chapter 3 sees Nebuchadnezzar loosely repeating Babel's crime in the same general area.

Uprisings from newly dominated peoples across the sprawling Neo-Babylonian Empire made Nebuchadnezzar's first years tumultuous and — apparently from ch. 2 — a bit sleepless. But God gave the king a dream to the effect that his was only the first in a list of other kingdoms that would later rise to power and ultimately be conquered by God's eternal kingdom (which would gather all nations and languages to be subject to the true human and king of kings — 7:13-14).

After *dreaming of an image* of various metals (kingdoms) that would supplant him — the head of gold — Nebuchadnezzar *sets up a towering image of gold* and commands all his various officials and leaders from the various nations and languages he has dominated and commands them — likely in their united and newly-learned Aramaic language — to worship his image. It is likely this is an image of Nebuchadnezzar, though it may be of his favorite god, Bel (4:8). While it may seem strange to Western Christians who are taught a harsh divide between religion and politics, the sacred and the secular — a divide that rarely exists in the East and certainly not in God's Kingdom — Nebuchadnezzar's image is all about the unity and security of his empire.

BIG PICTURE. *What is/are the central message(s) God intends to communicate through this chapter? Explain the significance of what you see and how this impacts thinking and living then and today.*

GOLDEN NUGGETS. *What else stands out to you as instructive or significant? Explain.*

NT CONNECTIONS. *Revelation 13 repeats themes from this chapter to warn the churches. Considering both texts, what final warnings and encouragements are in order for Christians today?*