

Chapter 3

“The Fiery Furnace”

Summary

- Nebuchadnezzar builds a great statue and demands all to worship it
- The three Hebrews who refuse are delivered from the king’s wrath

Outline

- I. The Golden Image
 - A. The image erected - vs. 1
 - B. The gathering of the leaders - vs. 2-3
 - C. The command to worship - vs. 4-6
 - D. Worshipping the image - vs. 7
- II. The Faithful Few
 - A. The accusation - vs. 8-12
 - B. The king gives a second chance - vs. 13-16
 - C. The offer refused - vs. 17-18
- III. The Fiery Furnace
 - A. Into the furnace - vs. 19-23
 - B. The Fourth Man - vs. 24-25
 - C. Delivered from the flame - vs. 26-27
- IV. The Outcome
 - A. The king’s proclamation - vs. 28-29
 - B. The promotion - vs. 30

Notes

- No time frame is given for this chapter. Some suppose it is up to 20 years after Chapter 2
- vs. 1 - the statue was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Probably was gold-plated.
- vs. 5 - some scholars believe that the statue is not an idol, *per se*, but the act of worshipping that was commanded was more of proclaiming loyalty to the empire. It was more political than religious.
- vs.14 - Note that Nebuchadnezzar seems to separate religion (“serve my gods”) from worshipping the image.
- vs. 18 - compare to Job 13:15
- vs. 19 - the only thing hotter than the furnace was Nebuchadnezzar!
- vs. 21 - normally men were stripped naked before execution in ancient times

Death by Furnace

- Execution by fire is not uncommon in history
- There is historical evidence for it:
 - The Code of Hammurabi has execution by burning twice
 - An ancient rival of Babylon named Rim-Sin was executed by burning
 - It is not unheard of throughout history
- Furnaces in Babylon
 - Used to refine metal or make bricks and glass
 - Could reach over 2000 degrees
 - Cremation - 1400 to 1800 degrees
 - May have looked something like the wonderfully accurate and expertly drawn image shown here.



Where's Daniel???

- We know that if he was around he would have been with his friends in the furnace
- Away on business?
- Exempt from the command to worship based on his position?
- His high office made accusations against him useless?

History... or Prophecy?

- While the story is primarily historical, some see a prophetic interpretation
- Even in times of Gentile domination, God still takes care of His chosen people
- Though Israel went without a homeland for 1900 years, God still was with his people
- Do we see a glimpse of a faithful remnant in the tribulation? (Rev. 7:3-8)