DANIEL 3

Faith Under Fire

Daniel 3 — A Deep Dive

> *"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*
> DANIEL 3:17–18

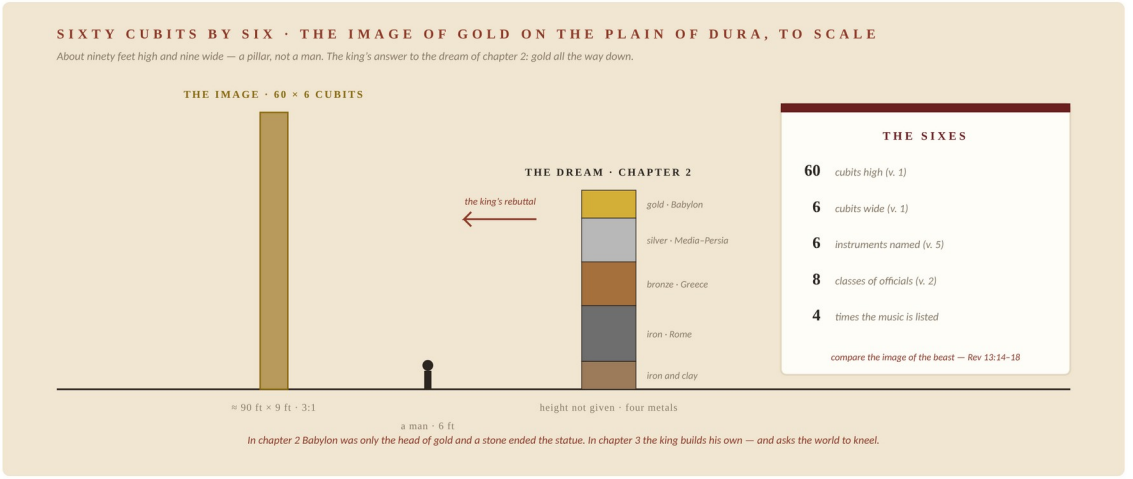
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · THREE VOICES: TSARFATI · MACARTHUR · GUZIK

Where the story stands

1. Chapter 2 ended with Nebuchadnezzar on his face before Daniel, confessing “your God is a God of gods”, and with the statue of his dream, in which Babylon was only the head of gold and every kingdom…

2. Chapter 3 is his answer.

3. He builds a statue of his own, sixty cubits high and six wide, about ninety feet by nine, and it is gold all the way down.



An Image of Gold on the Plain of Dura

DANIEL 3:1

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati reads the statue as the king's rebuttal of chapter 2. God had shown him an image with a head of gold and feet of clay and a stone that smashed it; Nebuchadnezzar builds an image that is all gold and asks the world to kneel.

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur notes what the king has done with the revelation he was given. In chapter 2 he confessed the God of gods; in chapter 3 he builds a god.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik supplies the dimensions and the setting: about ninety feet high, probably gold-plated wood, on the open plain where the whole empire could gather. He draws the line to every regime since that has made…

THE ORIGINAL **TSELEM DI-DEHAV · "AN IMAGE OF GOLD"**

An Image of Gold on the Plain of Dura

THE MACHINERY OF COERCED WORSHIP · DANIEL 3:1–7

Worship made easy, emotional and unanimous: the pressure is atmosphere, not argument — and three men stayed standing in it

THE SUMMONS vv. 2–3	THE CUE vv. 4–5	THE COMMAND v. 5	THE PENALTY v. 6	THE CROWD v. 7
Eight classes of officials — the whole governing machine of the empire, assembled to bow together	Horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, "and all kinds of music" — listed four times (vv. 5, 7, 10, 15)	"Fall down and worship" — nine times in the chapter; instant, reflexive, bodily: the knee before the mind	"Immediately … the furnace of blazing fire" — a brick kiln turned into an instrument of worship	"All the peoples … fell down" — not because they believed the image was a god, but because the furnace was a furnace

THE SAME MACHINERY AT THE END OF THE AGE · REVELATION 13:14–17

An image set up by a world ruler · all who dwell on the earth commanded to worship it · a mark instead of music as the cue · death for whoever will not bow — and a remnant that will not (Revelation 13:8; 15:2). Tsarfati: the plain of Dura is a rehearsal.

But Even If He Does Not

DANIEL 3:8

For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati notes who the informers were, Chaldeans, the men Daniel had saved, and reads their envy as the old story of the Jew in a Gentile court: the foreigner promoted on merit, resented, and reported for his…

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur draws attention to the second chance. The king is not cruel at first; he is reasonable, bow now and all is forgiven.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik observes that the king's rage (verse 13) is the rage of a man who has been publicly disobeyed by his own appointees, and that his offer to replay the music is a kind of generosity, he wants them to bow,…

THE ORIGINAL **AKHALU QARTSEIHON · "BROUGHT CHARGES"**

But Even If He Does Not

"BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT" · THE THREE-PART ANSWER OF DANIEL 3:17–18

"We do not need to give you an answer" — nothing was undecided. Then the finest statement of faith in the Old Testament, in three clauses.

1 · ABLE

"our God whom we serve is able to deliver us"

FAITH IN HIS POWER

Nothing is too hard for Him;
the furnace is not a problem
for the God who made fire
(Ephesians 3:20; Jeremiah 32:17)

2 · WILL

"He will deliver us out of your hand, O king"

CONFIDENCE IN DELIVERANCE

One way or another — even death
would put them beyond the king's
reach; the hand that holds them
is not Nebuchadnezzar's

3 · BUT IF NOT

"even if He does not … we are not going to ser ve"

SURRENDER TO HIS WILL

Obedience not conditioned on the
outcome — "Though He slay me,
I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15);
the clause where faith becomes worship

THE FIVE EXCUSES THEY DID NOT USE — GUZIK

Everyone is doing it · It is only once · We will bow on the outside and keep our hearts right · We can do more good alive than dead · God will forgive us

They used none of them. The men who would not eat the king's food in chapter 1 were ready not to bow to the king's image in chapter 3 (Luke 16:10).

Most of our faith stops at clause 1 — we believe God can. Clause 3 is where it becomes worship (MacArthur).

Seven Times Hotter, and a Fourth Man

DANIEL 3:19

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati notes that the furnace was not built for this; it was a brick kiln, the ordinary industrial fire of a city built of baked brick, and the king turned it into an instrument of worship-by-terror. He…

JOHN MACARTHUR

"His facial expression was altered." MacArthur reads the king's rage as the response of an idol to being refused.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik walks the detail, the valiant warriors, the trousers, coats and caps, the urgency of the command, and notes that the text gives the reader every reason to believe the three are dead at verse 23. Then he…

THE ORIGINAL **CHAD-SHIV'AH · "SEVEN TIMES MORE"**

Seven Times Hotter, and a Fourth Man

SEVEN TIMES HOTTER · WHAT THE FIRE DID, AND WHAT IT DID NOT — DANIEL 3:19–27

The text counts the garments going in so the officials can count them coming out. The only thing the fire consumed was what bound them.

WHAT THE FIRE BURNED

the valiant warriors who carried them up
"the flame of the fire slew those men" (v. 22)

the ropes
thrown in "still tied up" (v. 23); seen "loosed" (v. 25)

the king's question
"what god is there who can deliver?" (v. 15) → v. 29

WHAT THE FIRE DID NOT TOUCH

their bodies
"the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men" (v. 27)

their hair
"nor was the hair of their head singed" (v. 27)

their clothes
"nor were their trousers damaged" (v. 27)

the smell
"nor had the smell of fire even come upon them" (v. 27)

THE FOURTH MAN · v. 25 — "LIKE A SON OF THE GODS" · v. 28 — "HIS ANGEL"

A pagan king's words for a divine being; the long reading sees the Angel of the LORD — the Son before Bethlehem (Genesis 16; Exodus 3; Judges 13). God did not keep them out of the fire; He met them in it (Isaiah 43:2) — and the first witness to His presence was the man who lit it.

Not Even the Smell of Fire

DANIEL 3:26

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

AMIR TSARFATI

Tsarfati reads the inspection as God's verdict delivered through the empire's own bureaucracy: the satraps and governors who were summoned to bow are now summoned to examine, and they find nothing. He notes…

JOHN MACARTHUR

MacArthur notes the change in the king's vocabulary: "the Most High God" is the language of chapter 4 arriving early. The king does not yet know God, but he knows what he has seen.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik draws out the completeness: hair, clothing, smell. God does nothing by halves.

THE ORIGINAL **AVDOHI DI-ELAHA ILLA'AH · "SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD"**

Not Even the Smell of Fire

THE FURNACE AND THE END · DANIEL 3 BESIDE REVELATION 13

A picture, not a prophecy — but the same shape: one image, one command, one penalty, and a remnant that will not bow

THE PLAIN OF DURA	DAN 3	THE LAST DAYS
A world ruler sets up an image	3:1	*the beast's image, given breath* **Rev 13:14–15**
All peoples, nations and languages commanded	3:4, 7	*"all who dwell on the earth"* **Rev 13:8, 12**
A cue everyone can hear — the music	3:5	*a mark everyone must carry* **Rev 13:16–17**
Death for whoever will not bow	3:6	*"as many as do not worship … killed"* **Rev 13:15**
A remnant refuses — and is reported	3:12	*"those whose names are written in the book"* **Rev 13:8; 12:11**
Preserved through the fire, not from it	3:25–27	*victorious over the beast and its image* **Rev 15:2**
Daniel absent from the plain	—	*"I will keep you from the hour of testing"* **Rev 3:10**

What to carry from this chapter

1

The statue is the king's answer to the dream.

In chapter 2 Babylon was only the head of gold; in chapter 3 the king builds an image that is gold to the ground and asks the world to kneel

2

Deliver is the spine of the chapter.

"What god is there who can deliver you?"

3

The pressure is atmosphere, not argument.

Music, a crowd, an instant cue, a furnace: worship made easy, emotional and unanimous.

4

"But even if He does not."

Able, will, but if not: total confidence in God's power, loose hold on the outcome, unconditional obedience.

More to carry

5

The fire burned only the ropes.

Bound and clothed they went in; loosed and walking they were seen.

6

God met them in the fire, not outside it.

Isaiah 43, verse 2 in the plain of Dura.

7

Not even the smell.

The officials who bowed in verse 7 inspect in verse 27 and find nothing: hair, clothes, smoke.

8

The king knew a great deal and still said “their God.”

He sends His angel, He delivers, He is worthy of trust (verse 28), and a decree that defends Him by violence.

Talk it through

1. The whole empire bowed on cue because the music played and everyone else went down. Where is the music playing in your world right now, the atmosphere that makes going along feel like nothing, and what does standing look like there?

2. “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” Who or what in your life is asking that question, a boss, a diagnosis, a debt, a fear, and what is your answer?

3. The three men did not need to give an answer because nothing was undecided. What in your walk is still undecided, still up for negotiation each time the pressure comes, that you need to settle once, now, before the furnace?

CLOSING

The music played and the world went down; three men stayed standing and went into the fire bound. The fire burned the ropes and nothing else, the fourth man walked with them, and the king who asked "what god" blessed Him by name, with not even the smell of smoke on the men who would rather burn than bow.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Daniel study page.