

Daniel 3:1-7

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Chapter 2 closes with the king, Nebuchadnezzar, prostrate before Daniel as he expressed his respect for Daniel's God, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." But the interpretation of the dream had been very flattering to Nebuchadnezzar, "You O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into Your hand, and has made you ruler over them all- you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours..." The question is, what was Nebuchadnezzar's take away from the dream? Did he get it that all that he had and all that he had accomplished was, in fact, a gift from God? Did he understand that what God had given He could also take away? Did he see that he was a king under the authority of his Creator? or, Did

Nebuchadnezzar come away from the dream and its interpretation with his ego bursting with the news that he was called a king of kings and that his kingdom was greater than those that would follow it? Daniel 3 seems to give us an answer to these questions.

The golden image that Nebuchadnezzar made may very well have been inspired by his dream in which his kingdom was the head of gold. This was the wrong direction to take the dream. The dream was a witness to the king's dependence upon the initiative of God in choosing to empower him. The dream was a sobering reminder that his kingdom's days were numbered and that its demise would follow his own reign. The dream declared that he was not the ultimate authority, this belongs to God alone. The dream declared that the God of heaven, Nebuchadnezzar's own Creator, had revealed Himself to the Jews and that Daniel was close to this God. Ignoring all of these conclusions that were in the dream, Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose size dwarfed any previous celebration of divinity, to celebrate his own greatness.

Chapter three returns to the irony of chapter one. There, Daniel's plight as a

captive, bedraggled, diseased, weak, and in a state of shock from his many losses is presented to us as a young man in whom there was no blemish, good looking and gifted in all wisdom... Daniel's inclusion in the king's school is presented as the greatest of honors and his subsequent castration in order to so serve in hidden so cleverly that even today, no one wants to say so. And so the government officials gather at the command of the king, the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces are present for the dedication of the image. The music plays, the horn and flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and then the world falls down in their worship of the image. All peoples and nations and languages fall down in worship of the image of and made by the great emperor, Nebuchadnezzar. It was the greatest day that ever was.

This was the reality as it was imagined by the king. It was not the reality experienced by the people. To what better use might the gold have been applied? Mandatory worship is not worship at all, just the obeisance of fear. Where there is the abuse of power, resistance will rise up.