–Save This Page as a PDF–

Dani'el's Friends Questioned
3: 13-15

Dani'el's friends questioned DIG: What are the ways that God claims to be unique? What titles and descriptions does God use of Himself? What does each mean? In what ways is He different from the idols in Isaiah 44:12-20? For what reason is idolatry mocked in these verses? In what ways do those who worship idols end up like the idols themselves? List some of the ways we are asked to compromise within our culture if we are going to fit in with the general public. What kind of concerns distract us from being concerned with what ADONAI wants from us? What are the empty vessels today?

REFLECT: What idols have people in our culture created for themselves? Why are people attracted to these false gods? With which ones do you struggle? How have you seen these false gods end up oppressing those who make them? Karl Marx said that "religion is the opiate of the people" to drug them into ignoring reality. How might the prophet agree with him? How do the modern forms of idolatry do that? How might worshiping God end up being an idol itself? How is true worship of the LORD different? In what way have you experienced that following these modern idols merely ends in futility?

The three Israelites knew that all idols are merely empty vessels.

A case could be made as early as **Chapter 2** that **Nebuchadnezzar** reveals a sense of insecurity. This sounds surprising for the most powerful human being on the face of the earth, but with power and wealth come those who want to take it away for themselves, even if it means murder. **Nebuchadnezzar's** insecurity is apparent in **his** treatment of **the magi** earlier (**to see link click As – The Challenge to the Magi**), as well as **his** happiness after learning that **he** was the **head of gold** (see **Ay – The First Empire: A Head of Gold**).[128]

Furious with rage that **Shadrach**, **Meshach**, and **Abednego** would not **bow**

down before **his statue** (see **Bm – The Accusation Against the Jews**) **Nebuchadnezzar summoned them.** Justice demanded that **the** three **men** should not be condemned on hearsay alone and therefore, despite **his** furious **rage**, **Nebuchadnezzar** gave **them** the opportunity to recant. Perhaps **he** had grown fond of **them**, or perhaps **he** had made a large investment of time and money on **them**. Whatever the reason, it was vital that **the** great **king** should not lose face before the magnificent gathering of international delegates.[129]

So these men were brought before the king. Almost in disbelief, **Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up (3:13-14)?** It is clear that **the king** regarded **their** disobedience as a personal affront. One could argue that **they** not only made **the king** feel that **he** owed **them** nothing, but that **they** owed **him their** allegiance! After all, it was **Dani'el** alone who had revealed **the dream** to **the king** (see **Aw – The King's Dream**). **Nebuchadnezzar** had only appointed **the three** to positions of authority at **Dani'el's** request.[130]



Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then **Nebuchadnezzar** climaxes **his** threat with a statement that gets at the heart of the chapter: **Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand (3:15)?** In light of **the king's** experiences with **the God of the Jewish people**, this statement was one of defiance and showed surprising arrogance. **Nebuchadnezzar's** tone had been quite different earlier when **the king said to Dani'el, "Surely your God is the God of**

gods and the Lord of kings," the ruler over **the kings** of the earth, **and a Revealer of mysteries** because **ADONAI** was the only **God** who was **able to reveal this mystery (2:47).** What had changed? **Nebuchadnezzar** had set up **the golden statue** *after* **he** had conquered **Jerusalem** (see **Jeremiah Gb – The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC**). That victory made **him** believe that **he** was supreme in **his** power and could defy **the God** whose **City** and **Temple he** had destroyed.[131] However, later, **he** would change **his** tune (see **Bx – Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation**).

The Babylonian king could threaten **the Jews** all **he** wanted, but **Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Mishael) and Abednego (Azariah)** knew something that **Nebuchadnezzar** didn't. **They** had studied the TaNaKh and knew that all **idols** are merely empty vessels (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ht – Worship the LORD, Not Idols**). The Achilles' heel of all paganism is **idol** making. And the line of reasoning used by **Isaiah** to reveal it is detailed and devastating. In **Isaiah 40:18-20** and **41:5-7**, **idols** were exposed by contrasting **them** to the holiness of **ADONAI**. But in **Isaiah 44:6-20** that argument is reversed, **the glory of God** is seen in contrast to the absurdity and uselessness of **idols**. Instead of logical rejection of **idol** worship, **Isaiah** appeals to our imagination to drive home the final nail of persuasion. Thus, when **he** finished **his** sarcastic illustration, it is simply unthinkable to compare those chunks of **wood** and **stone** to **the Holy One of Isra'el (Is 43:3)**. **The** three **Jews** knew that **the golden statue** was merely an empty vessel, and therefore would not **bow down** to **it**.

In mid-1938 Adolf Hitler paid a visit to Italy, hoping to cement an alliance. The Italian dictator Mussolini entertained him royally, subjecting him to various displays of Italian military "might." But the crowds had a sort of sullen apathy toward the German leader. Hitler spent four hours in Florence, but must have been dismayed when it became clear that the cheers that he heard were all fake; they were crowd effects from some Italian movie and were played by a bunch of amplifiers from open windows. It was a sign that something was wrong, that there can't be great power and real emptiness side-by-side.

This is what **Dani'el** wants us to see. Once you see the farce, the emptiness behind the façade of power, then you will be less likely to be intimidated by the pagan pressure. The matter **Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Mishael) and Abednego (Azariah)** faced was deadly serious. But in the manner in which the story is told is subtly humorous, and the humor is intended to help you stand up against the idols of today, especially if you see the real weakness behind the veneer

of power.[132]

Dear heavenly ***Father****, praise* ***Your*** *wonderful* ***steadfast love*** *(****Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds (Psalms 36:5)*** *and* ***Your almighty power (Genesis 17:1). And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Revelation 1:8****,* ***4:8, 19:11-21)!***

Your Almighty power has complete victory over death and over all the kings of the whole earth ***(Revelation 19:17-21).*** *Your Almighty power also conquered the enemy death! You only needed to speak a word and you were able to bring back to life: male (****widow of Nain's son in his casket raised-in Luke 7:11-16****), female (****Jairus' young daughter raised-in Matthew 9:18-25, Luke 8:40-56****), and* ***Lazurus*** *buried for three days* ***(John 11:17-44)****.*

What a joy it is to know that when I die, ***You*** *have made a fantastic eternal home for me.* ***Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be*** ***(John 14:1-3).*** *Thank* ***You*** *for* ***Your*** *painful sacrifice* ***(John 1:29, Second Corinthians 5:21)*** *to conquer death* ***(Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)*** *so those who love* ***You (John 1:12, 14:23, Romans 10:9-11)*** *become* ***Your*** *children and spend forever praising and exalting* ***You*** *in heaven! In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*