As we continue with our series of messages from the Book of Daniel, I would like to ask you to open your Bibles to Daniel chapter three.

Let me give you just a little background information to set the stage for the scripture we are about to read.

**Background Information**

I want you to think back to the last scene in Daniel chapter 2. Daniel has just told King Nebuchadnezzar everything he wanted to know about the troubling dream he had been having. Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the image he had dreamed about represented five Gentile Empires of Kingdoms that would rise and rule the world for a period of time. Daniel had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the Head of Gold on that image represented his Babylonian kingdom.

Remember Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed by Daniel’s ability to reveal his dream and tell its interpretation, he offered praises to Daniel’s God. Now it’s important to note, Nebuchadnezzar did not forsake all his false gods and turn in faith to the only true God. Nebuchadnezzar simply “added Jehovah God” to his list of thousands of false Babylonian gods he worshiped.

To express his gratitude to Daniel for revealing the dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar showered Daniel with gifts and promoted him to a high position in his government. And at Daniel’s request, Nebuchadnezzar also gave positions of honor to Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego.

As we come to Daniel chapter 3, approximately twenty years have passed. Just as Daniel prophesied, Nebuchadnezzar’s Kingdom has grown in size and power. And as his kingdom has grown, so has Nebuchadnezzar’s ego!

This brings us to today’s scripture text in Daniel chapter three.
I have entitled this message: “Courage Under Fire.” And because this account takes in all of Daniel chapter 3, I plan to present this message in TWO PARTS, LORD WILLING.

Today in PART ONE of this message we are going to study verses 1-18. There are four distinct points we want to consider in these verses.

I. THE CURIOUS IMAGE (vs. 1-3)
II. THE CONSEQUENTIAL COMMAND (vs. 4-7)
III. THE COWARDLY ACCUSATION (vs. 8-12)
IV. THE COURAGEOUS STAND (vs. 13-18)

Before we read our text, let’s ask God's blessings on our time of study this morning.

P R A Y E R

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First of all, let’s consider……..

I. The Curious Image (vs. 1-3)

Daniel 3:1-3 (NKJV)

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.

2 And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

1. Daniel doesn’t tell us exactly what this image looked like. He
simply says, “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image…….”

- Some believe the image was similar to the one Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his troubling dream in Daniel chapter 2.

- Some believe the image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself and that he was trying to deify himself as a god.

2. While we don’t know exactly what the image looked like, Daniel does give us the following information.

(A) First, Daniel gives us the DESCRIPTION of the IMAGE.

v. 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of GOLD, whose height was SIXTY cubits and its width 6 cubits.

Although Nebuchadnezzar was extremely wealthy and could conceivably have erected an image of 100% pure solid gold, it is more likely this image was made of WOOD overlaid with GOLD.

Using our standard measurements the image was 90 feet tall by only 9 foot wide. These extremely disproportionate measurements would have made this image very bizarre looking, even COMICAL in its appearance. This is why many Bible scholars believe this golden image was likely that of a man sitting on a rather large base or pedestal.

( Picture an OSCAR AWARD with a disproportionate image of gold sitting on top of a pedestal.) That in all likelihood was how Nebuchadnezzar’s image looked.

ILLUSTRATION: Many years ago and biblical archeologists by the name of Oppert, discovered the remains of a brick mound 45 feet long by 20 feet high in the vicinity of where Daniel tells us
Nebuchadnezzar’s image was set up. This find supports the belief that Nebuchadnezzar’s image in Daniel 3 sat upon a pedestal or base.

(B) Daniel also gives us the LOCATION of the IMAGE. (v.1b)

v.1b He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

The plain of Dura was located 6 miles southeast of Babylon. Because there would have been no other buildings or structures on that open plain, Nebuchadnezzar’s image would have been very visible for many miles.

(C) Daniel also tells us about the DEDICATION of the IMAGE.

2 And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Once the curious looking image was set up, Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his government officials to the plain of Dura for a huge DEDICATION ceremony of the image.

Now there is more to this than a bunch of Babylonian dignitaries coming together for a dedication service of this image. Nebuchadnezzar had already decided to make this image an object of forced WORSHIP and all these high ranking officials would be the ENFORCERS to make sure the people complied.

This brings us to the second point we want to consider and that is………..

II. The Consequential Command (vs. 4-7)
Daniel 3:4-7 (NKJV)

4 Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

5 that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

7 So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

(A) First of all, notice THE SCOPE OF THE COMMAND. (v.4)

4 Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages.

Nebuchadnezzar’s command was all inclusive. Not only were the native Babylonians to bow down and worship this image of gold, so were the people of every nation the Babylonians had captured to build their empire.

All those high ranking officials that had come for the dedication of the image would take this command back to their corner of the empire and enforce it upon their people.

It was through this broad-sweeping state-imposed religion Nebuchadnezzar would keep control over his empire.

(B) Secondly notice THE SIGNAL GIVEN TO OBEY THE COMMAND.

5 that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and
psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up:

**MUSIC** is a powerful force. Music has an effect upon the **EMOTIONS**. Music can help create a spirit of **ONENESS** and **UNITY**.

Think of being at a ball game. When the National anthem is played, that is a signal for everyone to stand, remove their caps or hats, and place their right hand over their heart.

**MUSIC** can be used in a **POSITIVE** way or it can be used in a **NEGATIVE** way. Music can be used in the worship of the One True **GOD** or it can be used in the worship of **FALSE gods**.

When everyone in the Babylonian Empire heard the sound of orchestra music they were to stop whatever they were doing, turn and face the direction of the plain of Dura, and bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar’s image.

**(C) Next, notice THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE COMMAND.**

6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

Simply put, compliance to this command was a matter of life and death. Bow down and worship the image as you are told and you will **LIVE** and if you don’t comply you will **DIE**, in other words be executed by the government.

**(D) Next notice THE SUBMISSIVE COMPLIANCE TO THE COMMAND.**

7 So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Compliance to Nebuchadnezzar’s command was widespread. Basically the masses bowed to the image as they were told.
This brings us to the next point we want to consider and that is……

III. The Cowardly Accusation (vs. 8-12)

Daniel 3:8-12 (NKJV)

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever!

10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image;

11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

12 There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

1. Remember twenty years earlier after Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what he dreamed and what his dream meant? After Nebuchadnezzar showered Daniel with gifts and promoted him to a high position, Daniel requested that Nebuchadnezzar also promote his Hebrew friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to high positions. Nebuchadnezzar granted Daniel’s request.

2. How did the promotion of those three Jewish young men set with the Babylonians who had been over-looked for those positions? We find our answer in verses 8-12.

   Apparently the scorned Babylonians had been seething with jealousy and hatred toward Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego for twenty years. For twenty years they had been looking for an opportunity to get back at Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego.

   Knowing these young men were loyal worshipers of their Hebrew God, the jealous Chaldeans seized this “state-forced” religion as a means to get rid of Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego once and for all!

3. Notice that word “certain” in verses 8 and 12.

   Just like a bunch of school children, “certain Chaldeans” went to King Nebuchadnezzar to tattle on “certain Jews” who
weren’t bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image like they were supposed to. Of course those “certain Jews” they were tattling on were Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego.

In verse 12 we see three charges these cowardly Chaldeans made against Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego.

**CHARGE #1:** “Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, have not paid you O King, the regard due you.”

This was a LIE. Keep in mind Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego have been in their official positions for twenty years at this point. Not once in those twenty years had anyone found them guilty of insubordination or disrespect toward Nebuchadnezzar. They had carried out their responsibilities with the utmost integrity and character.

**CHARGE #2:** “They do not serve your gods.” That was TRUE.

In this instance the cowardly Chaldeans weren’t telling Nebuchadnezzar anything he didn’t already know. He knew Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were Hebrew captives and he knew they worshiped Jehovah, the God of the Jewish people.

**CHARGE #3:** “They do not worship the gold image you have set up.”

That charge was also TRUE. Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego refused to bow before the image.

Think of it this way: The first two charges were the “fuel”
The third charge was “the match.”

We see this as we move on to verses 13-18. Let’s consider........

**IV. The Courageous Stand (vs. 13-18)**

Daniel 3:13-18 (NKJV)

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach,
Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

1. Infuriated by the news brought to him by the “cowardly Chaldeans” Nebuchadnezzar orders that Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego be brought before him immediately.

2. Remember the fact that Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego worshiped Jehovah God had never been an issue with Nebuchadnezzar until now.

3. You notice Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t immediately pronounce them guilty. He ask them “If it was true they had not bowed down to worship his image?” And before they even answer his question, Nebuchadnezzar tells them what they can do to get themselves out of this terrible predicament: “When you hear the music just bow down and worship my image and we’ll let bygones be bygones.” But if you fail to comply, you will leave me with no alternative but to cast you into the fiery furnace, then which god is going to save you?”

4. Now look at the COURAGEOUS STAND Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego took before Nebuchadnezzar.

v. 16 Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.”
On the surface, this appears to be a very smart-aleck answer. But what Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were saying is, “Nebuchadnezzar, we must answer to a much higher authority than you.”

5. They go on to tell Nebuchadnezzar in verse 17 that if he does sentence them to die in the fiery furnace “Our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from your hand, O King.” Our God is able to deliver us! Oh brothers and sisters, there is a powerful biblical truth you don’t want to ever forget!

No matter what you are going through! No matter how difficult your circumstances may be! No matter how hopeless your situation may seem……our God is able to deliver us!

6. But notice what Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego tell Nebuchadnezzar next……

18 But if not, (in other words, “Even if our God does not deliver us from the fiery furnace” ) let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

What Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were acknowledging, is our faith in Almighty God is not based upon what He does for us, our faith is based upon the truth that He is the only true God and we will not bow down to your false image no matter what happens to us!

CONCLUSION

There is a prophetic aspect to this account we must not overlook.

Remember the title of this series from Daniel is “Back To The Future.” In Daniel 3 we see a parallel of what is to
come in the future during the reign of the Antichrist.

In DANIEL 3, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set up an IMAGE and forced his whole kingdom to WORSHIP that image. In REVELATION 13, the Antichrist, the ruler of Babylon the Great (during the Great Tribulation) will set up an IMAGE and force the whole WORLD to bow down and worship it. (Revelation 13:14)

In DANIEL 3, King Nebuchadnezzar cast those who refused to bow down to his image into the fiery furnace. In REVELATION 13, the Antichrist will have those who refuse to bow to his image beheaded. (Revelation 13:10)

In DANIEL 3, the image was 60 cubits high by 6 cubits wide. In REVELATION 13, we learn the “mark of the beast” or “the number of the image” will be 666. (Revelation 13:18) (The number “6” is the imperfect or incomplete number of MAN. The number “7” is the perfect and complete number of GOD.)

In DANIEL 3, it was the Jews who pledged undying allegiance to Jehovah God who faced death. In REVELATION 13, it will be the Jews who pledge an undying allegiance to Jesus Christ who will face death.

As we bring PART ONE of this message to a close may all of us do some deep soul-searching as to just how courageous our own faith truly is.

It is easy to be a COURAGEOUS CHRISTIAN while we are here in this Church building surrounded by our brothers and sisters-in-Christ who believe as we believe. But how courageous is our faith out there........out in the real world? HOW COURAGEOUS IS YOUR FAITH UNDER FIRE?