

Daniel 3- God and Culture

In a culture where religious pluralism is the order of the day, a person's faith in God can easily be compromised and hijacked into being something that was never intended. So the question arises, "What place does God have in such a culture?" This is the same question that confronted God's people as they lived in Babylonian exile, and comes to a head when the King of Babylon instituted state religion.

Did God still have a place in such a culture? If so, what was it?

Priority of dedication (vv1-7)

What were the people of Babylon to be dedicated to? (v4) Who instigated this, and how?

Why was this an issue for God's people living in Babylon?

You may notice the author keeps repeating the events surrounding the worship of the image (vv2, 3, 4-6, 7, 10-11, 15). Biblical writers often use repetition as a literary technique. Why would the author be using repetition here?

What was the expected response and outcome? (vv4-6).

What might be the motive behind such actions? (for a hint, cf. Genesis 11:4).

In the many mentions of Nebuchadnezzar's name, we're supposed to see a contrast between these two kings. How would you compare Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar?

How would you describe the people and their actions? (v7)

How might this affect Jewish-Babylonian relations? (cf. Exodus 20:3-6)

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Think it through

What are the issues today affecting our relationship with our culture today?

In what ways do we find ourselves 'towing the line'?

The Accusation (vv8-12)

How were the Jews perceived in Babylon? (vv8, 12)

What do you think might have motivated their complaint?

Think it through

How are Christians perceived today?

What sort of opposition do we face?

What might motivate this opposition?

The threat (vv13-15)

How would you describe Nebuchadnezzar's response?

What would have been his underlying concerns?

What regard does Nebuchadnezzar have for the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

How were these words meant to be received? (v15)

Think it through

What reactions do Christians receive today?

What might be some of the underlying concerns of people?

Confession under fire (vv16-18)

Why don't Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego feel accountable to Nebuchadnezzar? (v16-17)

What's the priority for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? (v18)

Commentators say death by burning was a common practice during these times. Nebuchadnezzar isn't mucking around! Clearly, the lives of 3 men are at stake. But there's something far greater at stake. What is it?

Do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego expect a favourable outcome?

Are they concerned about what God can do, or who God is?

Think it through

Should Christians feel accountable to the demands of our culture?

What should be our priority?

When we do experience opposition, what is really at stake?

Should we expect a favourable outcome?

The sentence (vv19-23)

What's Nebuchadnezzar's response? (v19).

Is there any other response you might expect?

Nebuchadnezzar has decreed that anyone who does not worship the image will be thrown into a 'burning fiery furnace' (v6). What steps does Nebuchadnezzar take to ensure his decree is carried out? (vv20-23)

During the carrying out of Nebuchadnezzar's decree, some of his best men died (v22). What does this say about the manner in which Nebuchadnezzar carried out his decree?

To what extent does Nebuchadnezzar get his own way?

Think it through

We, as Christians, may face all manner of opposition and hardship. In turn, we may pray fervently the God will make things more favourable for us. Sometimes, God doesn't do this. Does this mean God has failed us, or our witness has come to an end?

The vindication (vv24-27)

How are Nebuchadnezzar's plans interrupted?

Think it through

Can you think of any instances where opposition to Christians, or Christian practices, have been thwarted even when it seems too late?

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The new dedication (vv 18-30)

How does Nebuchadnezzar respond?

Do you think Nebuchadnezzar is more concerned with who God is, or what God can do?

Discuss whether or not Nebuchadnezzar genuinely repented.

Think it through

In what way can people today be “accepting” of God, without really repenting?

What place should God have in our culture?

When we do face opposition, what’s really at stake?

How should we respond to opposition – accusations, threats, and decisions made against us?