

## OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land

Who said : " Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.

And on the pedestal these words appear:

' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair !'

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."





“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.”

If that's all you knew, you would think...what?

Here's the thought that popped into my head, kind of as a title for this chapter: How Nebuchadnezzar failed to learn the lesson of Daniel 2:37-38, 44-45.

What was the lesson he should have learned in ch. 2?

- It was the one that he finally learned in 4:34-37.
- God—Daniel's God—is the true King of the nations; Nebuchadnezzar's power and authority were only derived, given...and only for a short time.

Here's the title we're using for the book:

## The King of the Nations

Our key verse for the book is 4:34b—"His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation."

The book divides naturally into two halves...

- Daniel in the King's courts ~ chs. 1-6
- Daniel and the King's visions ~ chs. 7-12

Daniel 3—How Nebuchadnezzar failed to learn the lesson of 2:37-38, 44-45

- The worship of the golden image ~ v. 1-7
- The false accusation against the Jews ~ v. 8-12
- The fury of the king against the Jews ~ v. 13-23
- The Lord's protection of His people ~ v. 24-30

Here's the title we're using for the book:

## The King of the Nations

The worship of the golden image of the king ~ v. 1-7

- The making of the image of gold ~ v. 1
- The command to worship the image of gold ~ v. 2-6
- The worship of the image of gold ~ v. 7

The making of the image of gold ~ v. 1

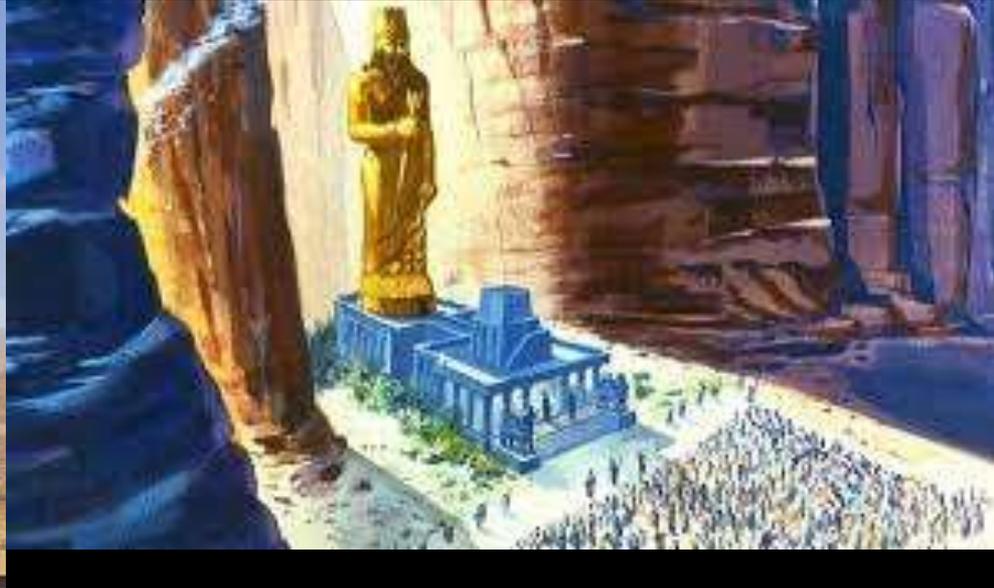
“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold...”

Question: What do you suppose it looked like?

Answer: The text doesn't say.

- It may have represented Nebuchadnezzar himself...or perhaps an image of one of his gods.

Every artist's rendering looks something like this:



# The making of the image of gold – v. 1

Verse 1 tells us four things; we're going to look at those four things, and then speculate on a fifth...

## Thing one: Its maker

Who made the image? Nebuchadnezzar did.

Translation: he ordered it made. Kings didn't make things—craftsmen and slaves made things.

- Both the expense and the vanity that went into this statue were massive.

## Thing two: Its material

The image was made “of gold.” Lots of it.

- Remember the image in his dream in ch. 2? Notice v. 31-32, 36-38. What does this suggest?

The making of the image of gold – v. 1

Thing three: Its size

A cubit was about 18 inches. So that means that this statue that King N. made was some 90 feet tall and nine feet wide. That's a lot of gold. And a lot of slave labor. And a lot of vanity.

Thing four: Its location

He put the image "on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."

Where's that? Don't know exactly, but somewhere near the ancient city of Babylon in present-day Iraq. Possibly not too far from the even more ancient Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1).

The making of the image of gold – v. 1

Thing five (that we're going to speculate on): Its purpose

Now that we know all of the facts about this image that the text provides, we have to ask the more important question—*why did he make it?*

Remember the image in his dream in ch. 2, especially v. 38—“...you are the head of gold.” King N. may have wanted to state that he was the greatest ever, that no kingdom could ever match his, that no king was like him, that his glory would never end.

- And thinking back to the Tower of Babel, he may have wanted all the people on earth to unify around him...whether willingly or unwillingly.

The making of the image of gold – v. 1

Thing five (that we're going to speculate on): Its purpose

A Babylonian document from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC) has been found that warns readers not to harm the image he had made: "Beside my statue as king...I wrote an inscription mentioning my name,...I erected for posterity. May future kings respect the monument, remember the praise of the gods...He who respects ...my royal name, who does not abrogate my statutes and not change my decrees, his throne shall be secure, his life last long, his dynasty shall continue."

## The making of the image of gold – v. 1

Thing five (that we're going to speculate on): Its purpose

Remember that Daniel wrote this book—notice what he repeats several times throughout the chapter. See v. 1, 2, 3 (twice), 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18.

And now go back to ch. 2 again and notice what Daniel says about God in v. 21—He is the one who “sets up kings.” Iain Duguid: “Even if the statue represented a god, no one was left in any doubt as to whose power lay behind its existence.”

- Rather than being humbled by the dream of ch. 2 that so clearly proclaimed God's position as the true King of the nations, Nebuchadnezzar comes across as proud and defiant.

The command to worship the image of gold – v. 2-6

Notice, first, who it is who seeks worshippers—

“Then King N. sent to gather the satraps, etc...”

And lots of invitations were sent out for the dedication of the great image. Who got them?

- “...the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces”
- In other words, all of the government and civil officials—representatives of the entire kingdom.
- The message would go out loud and clear to the entire kingdom: want to keep your job and your home and your life? Simple: worship the image.

The command to worship the image of gold – v. 2-6

So all of these officials “gathered for the dedication of the image...and they stood before the image...”

Once they were all there—with Nebuchadnezzar no doubt looking on approvingly—a guy stands up at the base of the statue, “the herald,” and gives a very simple message:

- When the worship band starts playing, fall down and worship the image.
- If you do, you get to stay alive.
- If you don't, you are toast. Literally.
- You can have any god you want, just as long as you worship Nebuchadnezzar's image first.

The command to worship the image of gold – v. 2-6

Was Nebuchadnezzar maybe a little insecure in the loyalty of his government and civic officials?

Whether he was or not, he added a little motivation to the command to worship with these 3 magic words:

- Burning
- fiery
- furnace.

If you had thought this whole thing was kind of silly, and you were not going to get dust all over your expensive clothes by falling down on the ground, well...hey, the clothes could always be washed, right? It's either that, or "burning fiery furnace."

## The worship the image of gold – v. 7

Verse 7 is pretty straightforward:

- The worship band starts playing,
- Everyone falls flat on the ground.

Well, not *quite* everyone. More on that next week.

For now, we'll go with the way Daniel writes it in the text: "all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image..."

Highly motivated as they were by ~~their undying love for good King Nebuchadnezzar~~ those three little words "burning fiery furnace," all of the government officials, and anyone else who happened to be close by, were down in the dirt. Fast.

## The worship the image of gold – v. 7

Here's how John Calvin puts it: "...a king's edict is not simply a wind, but a violent tempest, and no one can oppose their decrees with impunity; consequently those who are not solidly based upon God's word, do not act from true piety, but are borne away by the strength of the storm."

Or in this case by the strength of the threat. This was nothing more than the thin veneer of the king's ego in coercing his government officials to worship his image—there was no heartfelt response called for from them. All they had to do was fall down. That's it. The outward show of worship was enough.

This is just the first act in this drama—what can we glean from it?

Next week we'll see how this whole thing played out for Daniel's three companions. One wonders, though: where was Daniel? Presumably he was not in attendance that day for whatever reason, since he most certainly would have stood along with the three of them in defiance of the king's command. How'd he manage to get out of this? The text doesn't say, so we'll leave it at that.

What do we have to think about first here?

- We have to think about Daniel's readers—what did he intend for them to get out of this?

This is just the first act in this drama—what can we glean from it?

For Daniel's audience, it started here: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image...you shall not bow down to them...for I the LORD your God am a jealous God..." - Ex. 20:2-5.

This was a first commandment issue. Daniel's fellow Jews were in captivity—how could they live faithfully as exiles, and still keep the commandments? Here was the starting place. Seek the welfare of the kingdom where you live, but don't bow down to their gods.

This is just the first act in this drama—what can we glean from it?

How do you live faithfully in exile? You remember the goodness of God toward you, and then realize that it may cost you to follow Him.

More on this next point next week, but it's worth mentioning here: three stood in defiance. When you stand, knowing that it may cost you, know that you don't stand alone...

- See 1 Peter 5:6-9
- And 1 Kings 19:9-18

We don't stand alone, but we have to be willing to.

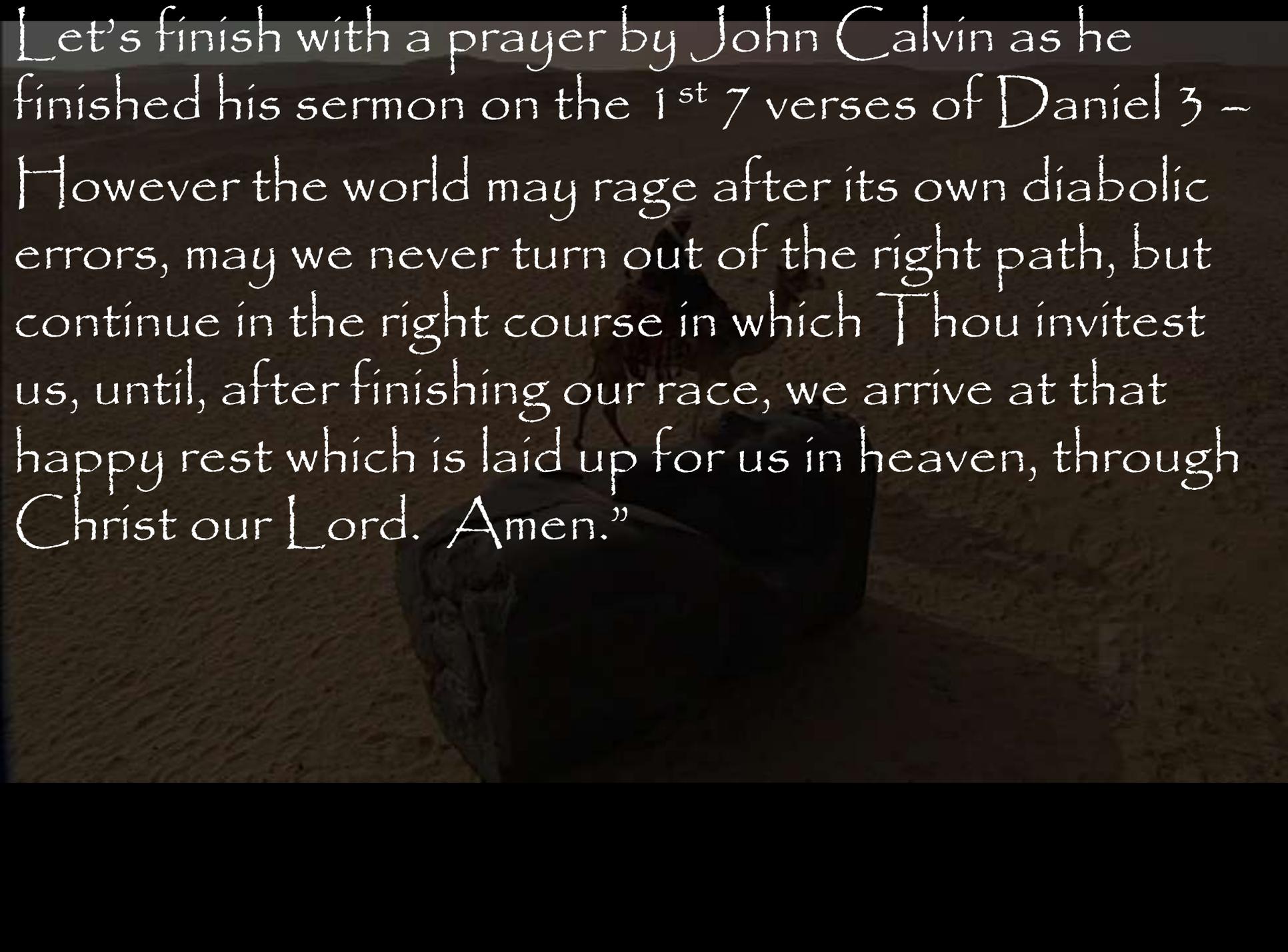
This is just the first act in this drama—what can we glean from it?

How does our culture pressure us to put God in second place?



Let's finish with a prayer by John Calvin as he finished his sermon on the 1<sup>st</sup> 7 verses of Daniel 3 –

“Grant, Almighty God, since we always wander miserably in our thoughts, and in our attempts to worship Thee we only profane the true and pure reverence of Thy Divinity, and are easily drawn aside to depraved superstition,—Grant that we may remain in pure obedience to Thy word, and never ben aside from it in any way. Instruct us by the unconquered fortitude of Thy Spirit. May we never yield to any terrors or threats of man, but persevere in reverencing Thy name even to the end.



Let's finish with a prayer by John Calvin as he finished his sermon on the 1<sup>st</sup> 7 verses of Daniel 3 –  
However the world may rage after its own diabolic errors, may we never turn out of the right path, but continue in the right course in which Thou invitest us, until, after finishing our race, we arrive at that happy rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.”