

Daniel 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Analysis

Nebuchadnezzar erects an enormous golden image 'sixty cubits' high (90 feet) and 'six cubits' broad (9 feet). The proportions (10:1 ratio) suggest this was either a human figure on a tall pedestal or an obelisk-like structure. Gold symbolizes the king's empire (cf. 2:38) but now explicitly demands worship, making literal the metaphorical pride. The location in 'plain of Dura' (Aramaic: biqa, valley) provided space for massive gathering. This image represents the state demanding absolute allegiance, foreshadowing end-times persecution when worship of the beast is mandated (Revelation 13:15). The image's likely connection to Daniel 2's vision shows humanity's response to divine revelation—rather than humbling himself, the king doubles down on self-glorification.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings erected colossal statues as political propaganda asserting divine authority and demanding loyalty. The plain of Dura (possibly near Babylon) could accommodate vast crowds. The image was likely overlaid with gold rather than solid gold due to cost and structural requirements. Dedication ceremonies for major building projects involved elaborate religious rituals, feasting, and oaths of loyalty. Nebuchadnezzar ruled at Babylon's height, having rebuilt the city magnificently including the Hanging Gardens.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the golden image represent human pride's response to divine revelation—self-glorification rather than repentance?
2. In what ways do modern states demand absolute allegiance that conflicts with worship of God alone?

Interlinear Text

נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר	מֶלֶךְ	עָבַד	צֵלָם	דִּי	בַּדָּה	רוּמָהּ
Nebuchadnezzar	the king	made	an image	H1768	of gold	whose height
H5020	H4430	H5648	H6755		H1722	H7314

אַמֵּי	שְׁתֵּי	פְּתֵי	אַמֵּי	שֵׁשׁ	אֶקְיָמָהּ
cubits	was threescore	and the breadth	cubits	thereof six	he set it up
H521	H8361	H6613	H521	H8353	H6966

בְּבִקְעָה	דוּרָא	בְּמִדְיָן	בָּבֶל:
in the plain	of Dura	in the province	of Babylon
H1236	H1757	H4083	H895

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 2:19 (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

Jeremiah 16:20 (Parallel theme): Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?

Isaiah 46:6 (Parallel theme): They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

Hosea 8:4 (Kingdom): They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.

Acts 19:26 (Creation): Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

Acts 17:29 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Isaiah 2:20 (Creation): In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

Psalms 135:15 (Parallel theme): The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

1 Kings 12:28 (Kingdom): Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 30:22 (Parallel theme): Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.