

St. Matthew's Church
Thursday Night Bible Study
Daniel
Bp. Stephen Scarlett and Fr. Hayden Butler

Session II | 14 February 2019 | Chapter 3

I. Review of some notes from last week...

- A. Daniel and his friends are in Babylon as a part of the Captivity that followed the fall of Jerusalem to King Nebuchadnezzar. This exile happened in three stages and it's possible they went in one of the earlier ones because of their designation as trainees in the Chaldean wisdom for service in the king's court.
- B. Daniel and his friends set an early precedent of their unwillingness to compromise on certain points with the Babylonians in refusing to partake of meats and libation offerings. For this refusal to compromise he and his friends grow in strength and are exalted in the court of the king.

II. Some historical notes...

- A. Part of ancient warfare understood conflict of peoples as parallel to a conflict among deities. So, when one culture conquered another, it was understood that the god of the conquerors had triumphed over the god of the conquered.
- B. The construction of statues to gods was tied to the conquest and so the one in Daniel 3 may be understood to be a tribute to the triumph of Nebuchadnezzar over Judah.

III. Textual Notes for Chapter 3

- A. There is a resonance between the idolatrous image and the language used to describe both the tower of babel and the golden calf in the wilderness of Sinai links this conflict to both the great pride of humanity in vaulting itself toward heaven and the idolatry of Israel--the icon of its infidelity to God in the wilderness--that infuses this scene with both a stern reminder that this is how fallen humanity always eventually behaves and that there is a punishment for the people of God should they adjoin it through compromise and idolatry.
- B. The elaboration of the hierarchy of officials present combined with the listing of the instruments involved present this scene as something of a state-event meeting a sacred liturgy sealing the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar over the peoples of his empire. It would have been seen as the liturgical rite to pronounce the superiority of Bel over all other local gods.
- C. In the Apocrypha, there is a book called "The Song of the Three Children" which narrates the hymn sung by the three men in the furnace. It is the source for the canticles we pray in Morning Prayer called "Benedictus es" and "Benedicite."