

Handout: Daniel Lesson 3

Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue was 60 cubits high by 6 cubits wide (Dan 3:1). In Scripture, six is the number of man and multiples of six the number of man in rebellion against God. Examples of the number six in Scripture:

- 666 is the number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation (Rev 13:18).
- God commanded man to labor for six days (Ex 31:15).
- The sixth commandment in the Ten Commandments is the sin of murder (Ex 20:13).
- The sixth clause in the Lord's Prayer petitions that we not be led into sin but delivered from evil (Mt 6:13).
- The world turned dark beginning at the sixth-hour Jewish time (noon) when Christ was on the cross (Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44). In Roman time, the sixth hour is 6-7AM, the hour Jesus was in His trial with the Roman governor Pilate (Jn 19:14).
- Jesus was on the cross for six full hours; suffering to save man from sin, from 9 AM, (Mk 15:25) to 3 PM (see Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33-34; Lk 23:45-46). He gave up His life at the beginning of the seventh hour (the number of completion and fulfillment).
- All six of the letters which represent the number system of the Roman Empire added together yield the number 666: I = 1; V= 5; X= 10; L= 50; C = 100; D= 500 [there is no letter/number M. 1000 was two Ds back to back which resembled an M].

The Prayer of Azariah and the Canticle of the Three Jewish Men in verses 24-90 (NJB) are from the Greek Septuagint versions and Jerome's Vulgate (as well as the New Vulgate) that also uses Theodotion's Greek version. The section is in three parts with each poetic passage introduced by prose description of the scene with the men in the flames of the furnace. Each part recalls the promise God made to faithful Israelites through the prophet Isaiah in 43:1-31 (see above), and the men may have recalled it in their ordeal.

The three parts include:

1. A short introduction followed by the poetic Penitential Prayer of Azariah/Abed-Nego (3:26-45).
2. A prose account of the three Jews in the furnace (46-50).
3. A short introduction followed by the poetic Canticle of Thanksgiving sung by the three Jewish men (3:51-90).

Other Catholic translations may list the numbering of the verses differently than the NJB.

The Canticle of Thanksgiving begins with a prose description of the scene with the men in the flames of the furnace (verses 46-51). The key words in this passage are "Forever," repeated 33 times, and the word "bless/blessing/blessed," repeated 40 times. The focus of the hymn is first on God Himself and His greatness. Next, the focus is on His creatures in Heaven and on earth. Finally, the focus shifts to the goodness and mercy God shows to those who fear Him:

1. The hymn begins with praises addressed directly to God (verses 52-56).

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2. Then, the hymn calls on others to join in the hymn of praise (verses 57-87).
3. The hymn ends by explaining why Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in particular and all who fear the Lord should give praise and thanks to the Lord who loves them with an everlasting love (verses 88-90).

The Church calls the canticle of thanksgiving the “Benedictite,” and includes it in the Divine Office for Sundays and feast days. The Church also recommends it as a prayer of thanksgiving after the celebration of the Mass.

In 3:49, the “angel of the Lord” protected the three men. In other Old Testament passages, the “angel of the Lord stands for God’s power and protection (cf. Gen 16:7-11; Ex 3:2; etc.). However, in this passage, he appears as a person who stands with and protects the three Jewish men in the furnace like the angel who comforted and encouraged Joshua before the Battle of Jericho in Joshua 5:13-15. Some Biblical commentators have suggested “the angel of the Lord” and “the captain of the host of Yahweh” in Joshua was the pre-Incarnate Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 like Chapter 1 concerns a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar and divides into three parts:

1. King Nebuchadnezzar’s testimony concerning his dream of the Great Tree (4:1-15).
2. Daniel’s interpretation of the dream (4:16-24).
3. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream comes true (4:25-34).

In the dream the king saw:

1. A tall tree in the middle of the world observed from the “ends of the earth.”
2. The tree had beautiful foliage and abundant fruit, providing shade, refuge, and food for all living creatures.
3. A holy one from Heaven orders the tree cut down, so every living thing will know that God has sovereignty over humanity.

Daniel tells the king that he is the great tree.

There are seven parallels between Daniel’s visions and St. John’s visions in the Book of Revelation:

The Vision	Book of Daniel	Book of Revelation
1. The worshipping the statue	Chapter 3:5-7, 15	Chapter 13:15
2. The Leopard, the Bear, and the Lion	Chapter 7:4-6	Chapter 13:2
3. The ten horns	Chapter 7:8	Chapters 12:3, 13:1; 17:3, 8
4. The Beast mouthing boasting and blasphemies	Chapter 7:8,11	Chapter 13:5
5. The Son of Man coming on the Glory-Cloud	Chapter 7:13	Chapter 1:7 & 14:14
6. The war against the Saints	Chapter 7:21	Chapter 13:7
7. A three-and-a-half-time period (a time, two times and ½ a time)	Chapter 12:7	Chapter 11:9, 11