

**The book of Daniel:** This book takes its name not from the author, who is actually unknown, but from its hero, who was allegedly among the first Jews deported to Babylon, where he lived at least until 538 B.C. The book belongs to a distinctive type of literature known as “apocalyptic,” of which it is an early specimen. Apocalyptic writing first appears about 200 B.C. and flourished among Jews and Christians down to the Middle Ages, especially in times of persecution. Apocalyptic literature has its roots in the older teaching of the prophets, who often pointed ahead to the day of the Lord, the consummation of history. For both prophet and apocalypticist there was one Lord of history, who would ultimately vindicate the chosen people. It was probably written down in the form we have now during the bitter persecution of the Jews carried on by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167–164 B.C.).

The book contains traditional stories (chaps. 1–6), which tell of the trials and triumphs of the wise Daniel and his three companions. The moral is that people of faith can resist temptation and conquer adversity. The stories bristle with historical problems and have the character of historical novels rather than factual records. What is more important than the question of historicity, and closer to the intention of the author, is the fact that persecuted Jews of the second century B.C. would quickly see the application of these stories to their own plight.

There follows in chaps. 7–12 a series of visions promising deliverance and glory to the Jews in the days to come. The theological theme of the book is summarized in 4:17; 5:21: “The Most High (God) is sovereign over the kingdoms of men.” The book of Daniel develops and articulates the living power and faithfulness of the God of Israel even in the time of religious persecution, genocide, cultural white-washing of the Babylonian Exile.

**KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR** Nebuchadnezzar II, also spelled Nebuchadrezzar II, (born c. 630—died c. 561 BCE), second and greatest king of the Chaldean dynasty of Babylonia (reigned c. 605–c. 561 BCE). He was known for his military might, the splendour of his capital, Babylon, and his important part in Jewish history. He was the eldest son and successor of Nabopolassar, founder of the Chaldean empire. He is known from cuneiform inscriptions, the Bible and later Jewish sources, and classical authors...

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## Daniel 3

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> **KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR** made a golden statue whose height was sixty **cubits** and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the **satraps**, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>3</sup> So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, <sup>4</sup> the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.” <sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, at this time certain **CHALDEANS** came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall fall down and worship the golden statue, <sup>11</sup> and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. <sup>12</sup> There are *certain Jews* whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no

heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up **seven times more** than was customary, <sup>20</sup> and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>21</sup> So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>22</sup> Because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. <sup>23</sup> But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

.. His name, from the Akkadian Nabu-kudurri-ušur, means “O Nabu, watch over my heir.” Nabu was the ancient Mesopotamian patron god of literacy, the rational arts, scribes and wisdom..

**cubits:** an ancient measure of length, approximately equal to the length of a forearm. It was typically about 18 inches or 44 cm. So this statue was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide.

**satrap** a provincial governor in the ancient Persian empire.

**CHALDEANS** Chaldea was a country that existed between the late 10th or early 9th and mid-6th centuries BCE, after which the country and its people were absorbed and assimilated into Babylonia. Semitic-speaking (*the language family to which Hebrew is related*), it was located in the marshy land of the far southeastern corner of Mesopotamia and briefly came to rule Babylon, taking control from the Assyrians during the time of the stories told in Daniel.

The Persians considered this Chaldean societal class to be masters of reading and writing, and especially versed in all forms of incantation, sorcery, witchcraft, and the magical arts. They spoke of astrologists and astronomers as Chaldeans, and it is used with this specific meaning in the Book of Daniel (Dan. i. 4, ii. 2 et seq.) and by classical writers, such as Strabo.

*certain Jews* implies that a sinner is anyone who is missing the mark of what God’s desires (the act of sin), not doing what God desires. In the gospels the other religious leaders often use this term to describe tax collectors, prostitutes and others rejected by larger society for their work or lifestyle.

**seven times more:** In Hebrew thought the number seven is associated with divinity or perfection. This statement then reinforces the extreme or crazy extent to which the furnace had been heated.

**the appearance of a god** בַּר אֱלֹהִים: pronounced [bar elah] – an expression composed of the two words: 1) בַּר bar - (son) and 2) אֱלֹהִים elah - God (as in the God of the Hebrews and Bible),

the word is also used to refer to god(s) (as in heathen deities - such as Marduk - one of the Babylonian deities). The expression used here then literally reads (appeared like a son of god) - which could refer to a divine appearance, angelic resemblance or as some interpret using the word in the sense of the Hebrew God (YHWH) God himself, or even Jesus (another part of the Divine Trinity)..

**The book of 1 Peter:** Things are not always as they seem. Sometimes what most hinders our perception of what God is doing is our own expectation of what God should do or would do. Luke writes his gospel account of the person and passion of Jesus of Nazareth for someone names Theophilus. The name in Greek means "One who loves God". It is a name, and could also be a metaphorical name that Luke intends for all who seek to follow the Way of Jesus. Luke bases his account upon eyewitness accounts. That's what he tells us in his introductory prologue chapter 1:1-4. He writes to invite and exhort others to place their trust and faith in Jesus as the Way to real life. Our section is in the middle of the gospel after Jesus has given numerous teachings and done some miraculous acts of healing. His renown is growing, the crowds are looking for him. And the other religious leaders are upset at his increasing fame, or his style and approach, or maybe envious, or maybe all of these.

**stone:** λίθος: pronounced [lee'-thos] meaning a stone either small in size, precious (as in a gem), special stones cut in a certain form such as : stone tablets (engraved with letters) as used in 2 Corinthians 3:7; or statues of idols (as in Acts 17:29, Deuteronomy 4:28; Ezekiel 20:32); or it means a stone used for building and construction. It also is used throughout the Bible to designate large stones (specifically for construction) and by extension metaphorically of Christ - as here in 1 Peter 2.

**house** οἶκος pronounced [oy'-kos] meaning first a foremost a house, or dwelling, and in a larger sense as a household, family, lineage, nation.

<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." <sup>25</sup> He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has **the appearance of a god.**" <sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. <sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." <sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## 1 Peter 2:1-10

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a **living stone**, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup> **like living stones**, let yourselves be built into a **spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a **cornerstone** chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

<sup>7</sup> To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those  
who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner,” *(Isaiah 28:16)*

<sup>8</sup> and

“A stone that makes them stumble,  
and a rock that makes them fall.” *(Psalm 118:12)*

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they  
were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy  
nation, God’s own people, in order that you may  
proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of  
darkness into his marvelous light.

<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

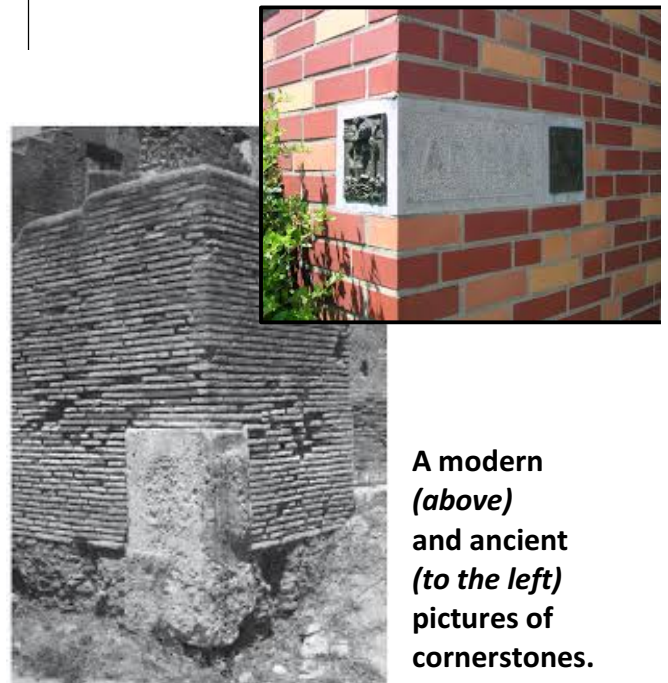
- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **How does that word intersect with your life?; our life?**
- **When do you feel most alone, or with-others, in your faith?**
- **How do you decide how you should live?**
- **How do you make sense of life?**
- **How do you respond well to life's circumstances?**
  
- **How does your faith in the God known by Shadrach, Meschack, and Abendego, the Living Stone spoken of by Peter and the Unknowable God made visible in Jesus of Nazareth – how does that faith anchor you in today’s upheavel, change and disruption?**

**cornerstone** ἀκρογωνιάτος pronounced [ak-rog-o-nee-ah'-yos] the foundaitonal stone at the extreme angle or corner in a construction. It’s also used to describe the persona and purpose of Jesus the Christ (in 1 Peter 2:6; Ephesians 2:20; the Greek translation of Isaiah 28:16 for אֲבֶרֶךָ פִּנְיָה) For as the cornerstone holds together two walls, so Christ joins together as Christians, into one body dedicated to God,.

The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure.

Over time a cornerstone became a ceremonial masonry stone, or replica, set in a prominent location on the outside of a building, with an inscription on the stone indicating the construction dates of the building and the names of architect, builder, and other significant individuals. The rite of laying a cornerstone is an important cultural component of eastern architecture and metaphorically in sacred architecture generally.

Some cornerstones include time capsules from, or engravings commemorating, the time a particular building was built.



A modern  
(above)  
and ancient  
(to the left)  
pictures of  
cornerstones.