

# OpenTheo

## June 24th: Daniel 3 & Acts 20:1-16

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Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace. The raising of Eutychus.

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## Transcript

Daniel chapter 3. 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 Jorah in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the councillors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the councillors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And the herald proclaimed aloud, You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre,

trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. Therefore as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Therefore, at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.

They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, O King, live forever! You, O King, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music shall fall down and worship the golden image, and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O King, pay no attention to you.

They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in furious rage, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the King.

Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the King, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If this be so, our god whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O King. But if not, be it known to you, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into the burning, fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace.

Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men,

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning, fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste.

He declared to his counsellors, Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O King. He answered and said, But I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning, fiery furnace.

He declared, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counsellors 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 cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own god. Therefore I make a decree, any people, nation, or language that speaks anything 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 rescue in this way.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. Daniel chapter 3 should be read as the continuation of what began in Daniel chapter 2. In Daniel chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great and terrifying statue made of four different metals, going down from gold, to silver, to bronze, to iron, and then in the toes and feet mixed with clay. Daniel revealed the dream and its interpretation.

Four successive kingdoms or empires that would eventually be brought down by a stone cut from a mountain without hands, which would grow into a mountain that filled the whole earth. Nebuchadnezzar himself and the Babylonian empire that he represented were the golden head. The empire of Medo-Persia that followed him was the silver arms and chest.

The bronze waist and thighs were Greece, and the iron legs and feet were Rome. With the advent of Christ, this towering statue of cumulative empires would be brought down, it would be crushed, and in its place would grow a mountain to fill the earth. A new altar that would gather together all the nations and peoples of the world, and also in the great elevation of this cosmic mountain, it would connect heaven and earth.

This dream was clearly threatening for King Nebuchadnezzar. It represented a possible fate for his kingdom that he wanted to avert. The fact that Nebuchadnezzar, shortly after

receiving this dream, sets up a towering image purely of gold, is not at all accidental.

He is responding to the threat of the dream, trying to present an image that represents his universal and continuous sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar wants to gather all humanity around his sovereignty with this golden image. As we saw in chapter 2, this has Babelic connotations.

In chapter 1, they are brought to the land of Shinar, which is the land where the tower of Babel was built. Babylon, of course, is related to Babel. And Nebuchadnezzar, in the chapters devoted to him, is always associated with these grand towering images, the great statue of chapter 2, the great image in chapter 3, and then in chapter 4, the great towering tree.

Each of these images represent not only an ascent to or descent from heaven, but also a hubristic attempt to gather all things, all peoples, around these great images or towers. Nebuchadnezzar's ambition is clearly the ambition of the tower builders in chapter 11 of Genesis. Chapter 3 continues the Aramaic section of the book of Daniel, which runs from chapter 2, verse 4 to the end of chapter 7. These chapters have a chiasmic, or book-ended structure.

Chapter 2 corresponds with chapter 7, chapter 4 with chapter 5, and our present chapter 3 corresponds with chapter 6. In chapter 3, the three friends of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are tested in their willingness to resist the king's idolatrous decree. Daniel faces a similar test in chapter 6, where he gets thrown into the lion's den. Just as his friends are miraculously preserved in the fiery furnace in chapter 3, he will be preserved in the lion's den in chapter 6. In both cases, they exemplify faithfulness to the Lord in the midst of an idolatrous administration.

As a response to the threatening dream of chapter 2, the building of this great image is a sign of the insecurity of Nebuchadnezzar. It's an attempt to shore up his sovereignty. In chapter 2, we saw some of the tensions that probably existed between Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans within his administration.

In this chapter, through the establishment of this grand public spectacle, Nebuchadnezzar seems to be attempting to bring some coherence to his fracturing administration. In this respect, we can also see the shadow of Babel behind. They do not want to be scattered upon the face of the earth, and so they build this great tower.

Nebuchadnezzar is building his great statue or image for a similar purpose. The image itself is of a remarkable height, 90 foot or 27 meters tall. In the text itself, it's described as being 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits broad.

As the Babylonians used a sexagesimal number system, the choice of these particular dimensions may not have been accidental. While this would not be the largest image in

the ancient world, it will be one of the tallest. The same language that is used of the image in chapter 2 is also used of this image.

However, as James Jordan argues, the proportions seem wrong for a human figure. We would expect, if it were a human figure, for its breadth to be at least double what it is relative to the height. We might perhaps speculate that it was set upon a grand pillar or pedestal, or perhaps it is something like a great gold-plated obelisk with the image of a person inscribed upon it.

Collective worship in this instance seems to be serving a grander political project. The construction of the image, as already noted, is in part Nebuchadnezzar's response to his sense of insecurity at the strength of the Babylonian administration. This great image, as a focal point for religious worship, is an attempt to gather together the whole of Babylon, both vertically, with the entire hierarchical structure of Babylonian government represented, and horizontally, with all peoples, nations and languages brought together and united in this common act.

Several groups of government officials are mentioned. Satraps, prefects, governors, councillors, treasurers, justices, magistrates and all the officials of the provinces. Pultana identifies the different groups as follows.

The satraps would be the rulers over the major provinces. The prefects would be the high officials immediately subordinate to them. The governors would be the administrators of smaller regions.

The councillors would be the advisors in the king's court. The treasurers, those who supervised the treasury. The justices would be the legal officials.

And the magistrates would be like sheriffs in some instances. Daniel chapter 3 makes a lot of use of repetition. It has these grand lists of these officials, also later of musical instruments.

The clothes of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and even the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are repeated on several different occasions, often redundantly. This has a sort of comedic or satirical effect. Nebuchadnezzar is vying to express his great power and sovereignty, but it is all proven futile and impotent in the end.

Nebuchadnezzar appoints a grand orchestra of exotic musical instruments that will lead the worship event. They are perhaps related to the different nations. The musical instruments are an assemblage of instruments of diverse cultural origins, with their names also coming from different languages.

Their precise identity is debated by biblical scholars. In verses 3 to 7 we see some of the most extensive use of comedic repetition. Phrases like the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up are repeated many times, and the narrator never avails himself of the many

opportunities that he has to trim down the great weight of the text.

The prose, weighted as it is by this abundance of repetitive elements, expresses something of the comedic pomposity of the king, and also of the mindlessness of what is taking place. In terms of the background of Babel, the musical instruments seem to be serving as a language intended to unite all peoples, nations and languages. Such common worship of the great image is an attempt to provide a solvent for all these different nations that have been brought together in this great composite of peoples that is quite fragile within.

Any who refuse to participate in the worship of the image are threatened with the burning fiery furnace, a fire that would have been maybe even as hot as 1000 degrees centigrade. The presence of the fiery furnace nearby probably suggests that it had some role in the construction of the image in the first place, perhaps producing the metal with which it was plated, or perhaps it was used for preparing lime. It had an entrance at the top, through which the Jews would later be thrown, and it also has an entrance at the side from which the king would later see them.

Foreign nations were often connected with images of fire and furnaces. We might think for instance of the brick kilns of the original Babel, the invention of which encouraged the ambition to make this great tower in the first place. Egypt is described as an iron furnace in places like Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 20, but the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

The same image of Egypt and the captivity there is used in 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 51 and Jeremiah chapter 11 verse 4. In Ezekiel chapter 22 verses 17 to 22, the image of a furnace is also used of the house of Israel in the book of Ezekiel chapter 22 verses 17 to 22. The Lord there speaks of purging away the dross of a nation that has become thoroughly corrupt. And the word of the Lord came to me, Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me.

All of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace. They are dross of silver. Therefore thus says the Lord God, because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem, as one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it.

So I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

I have poured out my wrath upon you. Later Jewish Midrash of Genesis chapter 11 and 12 would use this image of the fiery furnace taken from the book of Daniel and apply it

to the story of Abraham, Abraham being rescued from the fiery furnace of Nimrod who was the great empire builder and the one who led the project of the Tower of Babel. While this is clearly not a historical account as the biblical narrative itself is, it recognises appropriately a symmetry between these later events and those events back in the story of Babel and the call of Abraham.

Abraham is called against the backdrop of Babel, he is rescued as it were from the judgement of Babel and he will be used as a response to the threat of Babel. The conflict between the Jews in this chapter and Nebuchadnezzar who is a renewed Babel builder must be read against that backdrop in Genesis. Nebuchadnezzar is the heir of Nimrod, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are the heirs of Abraham.

In the image of chapter 2 we saw the struggle to create a unified structure out of these diverse materials. The image was of composite materials, of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. It was also of alloyed materials like the bronze and beyond the alloyed materials of admixed materials, materials that did not come together in one single new material in the case of the iron mixed with the clay.

As images of a series of empires this showed the inability of these great empire builders to form a united people. No matter how much the great empire builders attempted to bring these peoples together, the material of their kingdoms remained divided by customs, ethnicity, language and religion. The Fari furnace is a means of preparing and purifying metals, a means by which this united metal kingdom could be built.

Those parts that were not purified in the process, becoming part of the final structure, would be burned away or removed as dross. Representing these great empires whether the original Babel of Nimrod or the nation of Egypt under Pharaoh or Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar as if great furnaces might be a way of illustrating their attempt to bring people together through both purging unassimilable elements away and purifying what remains as a single metal. Any people who resist the great imperial ambition of Nebuchadnezzar would find themselves burned away as dross within this Fari furnace.

Only the pure gold of Babylon would remain. In chapter 2 the tensions between King Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans in his court was quite apparent Nebuchadnezzar did not trust them, was prepared to kill them all and re-establish his court with a completely different composition. Daniel the Jew had saved all of their lives but now these jealous officials seized their opportunity to use the King's words against the Jews that were rising among their ranks.

While it initially appeared that the King's decree had achieved its desired effect, here the Chaldeans inform him that it has failed in some cases, there is a fly in the ointment. Carol Newsome observes, disclosing the sources of the Chaldeans' jealousy. In the Chaldeans' speech the actual misdeed the Jews are alleged to have done is the very last element mentioned.

The information is preceded by two comments that interpret the significance of the act for the King. The Chaldeans represent the Jews' refusal to prostrate themselves as disdain for the King's own authority. One can perhaps imagine Nebuchadnezzar's response to this as being in part frustration.

His decree has been resisted by some that he himself appointed and beyond this he can see that his decree is being used for petty court machinations by the Chaldeans, a faction that he already distrusts. He made his decree to establish his universal and comprehensive sovereignty and now he already feels that it is being used against him. He is being manoeuvred into a position by the refusal of the Jews to cooperate and by the machinations of the Chaldeans to act in ways that he might prefer not to.

The ideal and the expectation was that everyone would bow to the image without objection. Nebuchadnezzar is furious, perhaps in part because he feels the supposed ingratitude of the three Jews, who despite him raising them to positions of high office, have resisted his decree, but perhaps also he feels that his hand has been forced. The Empire can't merely be subdued by means of imperial decree and grand spectacle, but he has to resort to force.

He had made a great power play, but some had resisted it and the result was to make him look weaker. It's very dangerous to overreach one's authority in the attempt to demonstrate it. Someone might always call your bluff.

Nebuchadnezzar doesn't really want to kill the Jews. The ideal is that they simply submit and so he is quite prepared to give them another chance. However, the Jews are not prepared to bow under any circumstances.

They serve the Lord over Nebuchadnezzar and his gods. Nebuchadnezzar is filled with anger and in his fiery anger he orders the fire of the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. The three men abound and are ordered to be thrown into the fiery furnace even while wearing all of their official vestments.

The furnace is so overheated that the men throwing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it are burned up themselves. However, looking at the three friends after they have been thrown into the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar sees a remarkable sight. He rises up suddenly and asks his counsellors whether there were only three men that had been bound and thrown into the fire.

Within the fire he sees four men, unbound, walking around and unhurt and the fourth man has the appearance of a son of the gods. The text never makes exactly clear who this person is. Many Christians have seen it as a Christophany, an appearance of Christ before his incarnation.

A natural connection might be with the story of the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3



where the angel of the Lord speaks from the midst of the burning bush that is on fire but not consumed. In Judges chapter 13 the angel of the Lord who appears to Manoah and his wife ascends in the flame of the altar. Just as the lion's den of chapter 6 seems to be an image of exile in Babylon, so the furnace, I think, should be read in a similar way.

In Daniel chapter 6 verse 22, Daniel says that the Lord sent his angel to shut the mouths of the lions and protect Daniel. Just as the angel of the covenant was present with Israel and Egypt, so the angel of the covenant is present with the Jewish exiles in Babylon. Whether represented in the den of lions or the fiery furnace, he preserves his people from harm.

They will neither be burned away as dross or assimilated into the great metal empire of Babylon, nor will they be consumed by the lions that surround them. They will be preserved and when the time comes they will be brought out unharmed. It may even be possible that we are to see some connection between this and the Lord's burning throne in chapter 7, where once again there is a fire that does not consume the one within it.

Nebuchadnezzar in his pride has set up a grand public spectacle to represent his own sovereignty and unwittingly had established a stage for the demonstration of the Lord's power. Nebuchadnezzar calls the three friends out from the fire, addressing them as servants of the Most High God. Recognizing in his address to them, they serve a higher authority than his.

The Lord's power is also demonstrated to the satraps, prefects, governors, king's councillors, and the other figures who are present. What had been intended as a unifying spectacle demonstrating Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty becomes a means of showing the Lord's. The chapter ends with Nebuchadnezzar blessing the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, even speaking of the three friends in a way that honors them for resisting his decree.

The chapter began with the decree of the king and it ends with a different decree, with a very different force to it. Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything 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 rescue in this way. In the preceding chapter the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was brought down.

In some ways we might see Nebuchadnezzar's decree here almost as an affirmation of the judgment upon the original image in the preceding chapter. Chapter 2 ended with the exaltation of Daniel and the friends within the court of the king, and this chapter again with a promotion for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. A question to consider.

Beyond its immediate historical reference, the book of Daniel speaks of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the imperial ambitions of proud human rulers. What lessons could a Christian political theology draw from this chapter and apply to current

day situations? Acts chapter 20 verses 1-16. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Sophrata the Beryan, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him, and of the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and the Asians Tychicus and Trophimus.

These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered, and a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer, and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him. And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board, and went to Mytilene, and sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios, the next day we touched at Samos, and the day after that we went to Miletus, for Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

After the riot in Ephesus, Paul now leaves for Macedonia at the beginning of chapter 20. He is now working his way back to Jerusalem, where his third missionary journey will be completed. Going through Macedonia, he goes through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, before moving down towards Corinth.

He is retracing the steps of his second missionary journey. While he is doing this, he is encouraging and building up the churches along the way, bringing news from one place to another, bringing ministers from one place to another, and collecting gifts to bring back to Jerusalem. Alongside this, he is also writing some letters.

He most likely writes 2 Corinthians at the time in Macedonia, as we might see in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 1-3. Paul on this journey is accompanied by several companions, including Luke himself, the wee returns at Philippi. These companions

represent various churches in the various regions, many of whom seem to intend to return with Paul to Jerusalem.

Why such a large company for a missionary journey that has seemingly completed? It seems most likely that they are a delegation of many of the churches in various parts of the empire, bringing their respective gifts back to Jerusalem with Paul, representing their congregations and so doing. This is a sort of harvest of the nations, which Paul is eager to bring to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, the feast of the harvest. This would bring the narrative full circle, back to the initial gift of the spirit at Pentecost in Jerusalem at the beginning of the book.

Now there is a new gift being given at Pentecost. Now the spirit is bringing in a much greater harvest and perhaps Paul is intending to perform a sort of symbolic presentation of the harvest of the Gentile mission field with these men. The fact that there are 7 named persons might even relate to the 7 lambs that are offered as part of the Pentecost sacrifices.

They have been gathered together around the time of the feast of first fruits and they will be presented in Jerusalem at Pentecost with their gifts for the poor. This will be an expression of the unity of the church in Christ. Like Jesus his master, the apostle Paul is also travelling towards Jerusalem and his capture there surrounded by a company of disciples.

Paul will also write the epistle to the Romans shortly after this, as we can see from Romans 15, verses 25-26. At present however I am going to Jerusalem, bringing aid to the saints. Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

We can easily fall into the trap of reading Paul's letters as abstract theological treatises. We can forget that they were delivered to particular bodies of people, in particular places, in particular times. This is really a critical juncture in Paul's ministry.

He is trying to bring back this large group of Gentiles that will represent the harvest of the Gentiles and he is writing to churches preparing them on the way. He is also writing to prepare ahead of time for his fourth missionary journey which he hopes will take him to Rome. We can easily read Paul's letters as books abstracted from time, as if Paul was writing about theology in a vacuum.

But reading Paul's letters against the backdrop of the book of Acts we can see that Paul was a traveller, he was a missionary, he was a man of action and his letters are actions too. His letters would often be designed to prepare the way for him in his mission or perhaps on occasions as an alternative to a visit where he lacked the time or the opportunity. This of course is especially the case for the prison letters.

In Troas, around the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, he gathers with the disciples there for a meeting on the first day of the week. He is trying to instruct them more deeply in the truth and it seems that he talks for a very long period of time. He talks for hours until midnight and then beyond that to the daybreak.

It is of very great importance to him that he grounds them as firmly as he can in the truth during the time that he has. In some respects we might see some Passover themes here. There's a sort of last supper in an upper room.

There is death at midnight just as the angel of death came at midnight upon Egypt. Paul is also preparing to leave for a long journey that will lead him up to the time of Pentecost. The reference to the Christians meeting on the first day of the week here raises the question of whether this had become more common practice by this time.

First Corinthians chapter 16 verse 2 also mentions the importance of the first day of the week. Whether or not this was just a pragmatic shift at this point, later on it would become clear that the movement from the last day of the week as the day of worship to the first day of the week was a significant theological movement. The celebration of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week commemorated the conclusion of the creation.

It also commemorated the formation of the covenant at Sinai. A shift to worship on the first day of the week seems fitting when the event that is being recalled is a new creation established on the first day of the week, the day of resurrection, and also the establishment of a new covenant established in Christ's resurrection too. Paul speaks at length in a room where many are gathered together and one of the young men, Eutychus, falls asleep.

In this room where they are gathered there are many lamps. Many commentators suggest that the lamps might have something to do with Eutychus falling asleep. The lamps affect the air quality.

But Eutychus is sitting in an open window so he is probably not experiencing the worst of the air quality and the fact that Paul is speaking on and on around midnight is likely reason enough to explain why he fell asleep. The emphasis upon the many lights does draw a distinction between a realm of great light and a realm of darkness. It is midnight and it is pitch black outside whereas inside where the disciples are gathered there is great light.

Lamps in the upper story of a house might also make us think of lights in the heavens, the third story of the created cosmos. Beyond this we could think about the connection between lights and Pentecost. At Pentecost the disciples were lit like lamps with tongues of flame descending upon their heads.

Eutychus falls down from the window and he is taken up dead. This is the fourth of four

stories in scripture that involve the raising of a dead body in an upper room. The other examples are found in the books of the kings and then earlier on in the book of Acts.

Elijah raises the son of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Elisha raises the son of the Shunamite woman in 2 Kings 4. And Peter raises Dorcas in Acts 9.36-42. In each of these cases it is associated with an upper room. Paul's bending over Eutychus as part of the means by which he is raised up might remind us of the way that Elijah and Elisha lie upon the bodies of the children that they raise up.

The contrast between light in the room and darkness outside, death outside and the raising to life inside might help us to see some symbolic import in this story. Feeling keenly the death and the darkness that surrounds them, it would be comforting and encouraging to the church at Troas to know that God is more powerful than all of the death and the darkness that might assail them. This section concludes with a lengthy itinerary of their journey back, past Ephesus.

The detailed character of this itinerary is perhaps understandable because Luke is with them. This is a first person account that he is giving at this point. Beyond that fact however, the itinerary might remind us of certain stories that we find in the Old Testament, as Abraham goes throughout the land, or maybe as the people conquer the land going from one place to another.

The story of Paul's missionary journeys is in many ways achieving something similar. A question to consider. This passage ends with an expression of Paul's intention to get back to Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost.

It's important to him to be there at that point, and as we have seen, there may be some symbolic connection between what he's doing in bringing the gift from the Gentiles and the Gentiles themselves at the time of the Feast of Harvest. Nevertheless, the reference to a Jewish feast, and Paul's eagerness to get back in time to celebrate it, might surprise some hearers. Yet this is by no means the only occasion where we see something like this.

Where else in the Book of Acts can we see references to Jewish feasts, and what significance is given to them at these different junctures?