

The Firey Furnace

Daniel 3

Part 2

Introduction; Last week in our study of Daniel we considered an introduction to the chapter. The book of Daniel is a Wisdom book, but it also contains important prophecy. In this chapter we can see an important picture of the very last *Gentile* kingdom. It is a picture of the kingdom of the Anti-Christ and when Daniel's 3 friends are preserved in the furnace that is a picture of how God will bring Israel through the fire of the tribulation and one third will be saved. This chapter also teaches us how to live in the midst of a corrupt pagan society. It teaches us that there are times when it is right to stand against the governmental authorities and it also teaches us how that is to be done. Let us now get into the chapter.

Faith Tested by Fire

Before we step into the chapter, I need to draw your attention to something very important. As we work our way through these chapters we need to notice that Daniel and his friends face one test after another. The first test was the food, then came the death sentence because the wise men could not tell the dream or the interpretation, now it will be the furnace, and then Daniel will face the lion's den. Why are these tests coming one right after another? The first of the tests are for the reason of the king coming to salvation. You see Nebuchadnezzar will get saved and the testimony of Daniel and his friends will play a major part in his salvation. It would be one thing for these men to proclaim their faith, but God wanted more. He placed them in the midst of trial so that they would have to live out their faith because this would leave a greater impact upon the king.

Application:

This is so important for us to understand. God often takes us through the trials of life so that others can see our faith lived out. We need to know this because we often think that as children of God, we should have an easy road to walk. But there are people watching us as believers and the way we handle the trials of our faith is an important part of our testimony. Not only do the trials speak to those watching us but the trials also are used by God to strengthen our faith for what is coming in the next trial.

James 1:2-8

² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Notice Daniel 3:1-6

Last week we considered the coup attempt against Nebuchadnezzar which brought this command to bow down to the image. The king had the image erected and commanded the rulers in his kingdom to show their loyalty. The music was used to play on the emotions of the people so as to put them in the right spirit to worship the image.

Notice the words of Larkin.

"All men are religious by nature, and are easily carried away by anything that stirs their religious feelings. Knowing this, Nebuchadnezzar took advantage of it. Everything was done to excite and stir the religious emotions of that vast multitude on the "Plain of Dura." Large orchestras, with their various musical instruments, were stationed at convenient places, and all the paraphernalia and ritualistic ceremony of idolatrous worship, with the most gorgeous display of religious trappings, such as were used by the "Babylonian Cults," were doubtless used to impress the bystanders, and get them to worship the Image."

In the Bible music is worship. It is a response to learning the Truth of God. In Exodus 14 we read about the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptians. Then notice what we read in Exodus 15.

Exodus 15:1-2, 20-21

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

² The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

²⁰ And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

²¹ And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

There is a thought about the instruments which are listed here that we need to consider. Some of the instruments here are described by Greek words which has given the critics an opportunity to declare that Daniel was written much later after the Grecian Empire by someone who falsely claimed to be Daniel. You see the critics just cannot handle the Truth that Daniel was able to foretell all the coming world empires of the Gentiles. They therefore need a way to explain these prophecies away. But let us just think about their attack on the Daniel as they use the Greek names for the instruments. If they were correct and this letter was written during the times of the Greeks why did not the writer use much more Greek language? Let us also understand that the Greeks existed in Nebuchadnezzar's day so to use the Greek words to name the instruments is no problem at all.

One more thought to consider concerning the golden image. The king built this image in response to the interpretation of the dream. In the interpretation of the dream the king was told that his kingdom would be replaced by a kingdom that was inferior to his and we know this to be the Medo Persian Empire. So, as the king has this image built and it is all gold and not just the head, he is rebelling against what God had revealed in the dream. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar believes there is no other power that can overthrow his kingdom and therefore his kingdom will last forever.

Application:

This is the mindset of every major power that has ever existed. They all have believed that they will last forever. Is this not the belief in our leaders concerning the United States of America? Many have come to believe that there is no other power that could

overthrow the US. For some reason there are people who have come to believe that God needs the US in order to carry out His will on earth.

If we understand prophecy, then we know that there is coming a day when our nation will no longer exist as we know it. The Bible tells us that as time moves forward that everything will wax worse. That is why we do not live for what we see here but we are to live for eternity.

2 Corinthians 4:18

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

There are believers who get caught up in trying to do all they can to reconstruct our nation and they therefore end up giving all their energy and time to the nation. This is not how we are to live. This mindset ends up labeling people as Christian Activists and there is no such person listed in the Bible.

Notice the words of Dave Hunt.

"Increasing numbers of Christians are engaging in social and political "activism" for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct. "Operation Rescue" is one example. Its founder, Randall Terry, explains that its purpose is to create social upheaval and thereby pressure government into changing the abortion laws.

No matter how commendable the goal of such tactics, there is not one example in the entire Bible of political or social "activism" ever being advocated or used by God's people. There are numerous cases of civil disobedience in Scripture (the Hebrew midwives, Daniel, Daniel's three friends, etc.), but it was never engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey Biblical principles.

"Christian Activism" involves the well-meaning but foolish attempt to force "Christian principles" upon a godless society through more effective lobbying, larger demonstrations, and greater "social upheaval" than the homosexuals, abortionists, or pornographers can produce. But rather than pressure the ungodly to live like saints, we must win them to Christ that they might live wholly for God.

We must denounce sin, call for repentance, and preach the gospel in convicting power. Yes, Christians should call for repentance from homosexuality, child abuse, pornography, and

abortion, but we should primarily be calling for repentance from rebellion against God and rejection of Christ. Rather than indicting the church for its lack of "social concern," it should be held accountable for its heresies and failure to preach the truth. It is hypocritical for the church to protest the world's sins while tolerating and honoring those who preach a false gospel and are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Instead of PROTESTS, we need PROPHETS who call the world to repentance. We need Enochs who walk with God and warn of judgment (Jude 14-15) and Noahs who preach righteousness and warn of judgment to come (2 Pet. 2:5).

"Christian Activism" is not Christian, and represents a detour from the straight path the church is to walk before the world. It can confuse the real issues, lead to compromise and unholy alliances, and divert time and effort that would be better used in proclaiming the gospel...Be fully engaged in rescuing souls for eternity."

Notice Daniel 3:7-12

When the music sounded everyone bowed with the exception of 3 men who were Jews. These young men were fully committed to walking faithfully with the Lord.

Exodus 20:2-5

² *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

³ *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

⁴ *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*

⁵ *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*

They have learned through the other trials that God would never leave them.

Notice Daniel 3:12 again.

The motive behind the Babylonian men reporting these men to the king was jealousy. In this verse we see that they report them not just as Jews who will not bow but they report them as Jews who were set over the affairs of Babylon that will not bow.

Application:

In the lives of these 3 Jewish men, we see a principle that is taught in the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:11-14

¹¹ Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

¹³ But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

One man said that these men experienced the Parable of the Whale, which is when we rise to the top, we can be sure that we are a target for a harpoon. Peter tells us that this is to be expected when we live for the Lord.

1 Peter 4:11-13

¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Getting back to Daniel 3:12 it is important to note that as these men refused to bow and in doing so, they were rebelling against the government ruling over them. Last week we discussed this briefly and here we have an opportunity to see some important points.

Application:

There are times when we must stand against the authorities. But there are some guidelines that we must follow.

1. There must be clear conflict between the laws of man and God. It can't be a gray area; it can't be just a casual disagreement. The government has to be telling you to do something that God says not to do or telling you to not do what God says we are to do.
2. All legal remedies must be exhausted. Too many believers want to jump right into an offensive act of disobedience when there are legal ways to handle the situation.
3. We must be willing to pay the consequences.
4. We must at all times maintain respect for the authorities that are over us even when they are trying to force us to go against the Word of God.

Conclusion:

We are saved and left here on this earth to glorify God. This we are to do when all is going well in our lives and even when we are facing the furnaces of affliction. Daniel's friends would disobey the government, but they would do it in a way that glorified God.