

25.01.2020 FROM FURNACE TO PALACE

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Daniel 3:17, 18

Our study of Daniel 3 this week teaches us about the nature of Man and its perpetual desire for self-exaltation. In contrast, those who have true faith in God will worship Him and serve Him no matter what the cost – whether it be suffering or death.

This chapter also helps us to draw comparisons with end-time Babylon, who will use religion, politics and business (wealth) to test the faith of God’s people. The issue is: *‘who will we worship...the true God or the false gods of Babylon?’*

The Golden Image: Daniel 3:1-7

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Daniel 3:1, 2

1. Ancient Babylon is associated with the number six. Their counting system characterised numbers by 6 and 60 (the sexagesimal system). It is still used for measuring time and angles. In Daniel 3:1, Nebuchadnezzar’s statue was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. (It is not a coincidence that in Revelation, the number 666 is associated with Babylon and the exaltation of man instead of God).
2. Daniel 2 ends with Nebuchadnezzar acknowledging the God of Daniel...*“Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.”* But there is no personal commitment to this God.
Only a daily personal commitment to God will keep us humble. If our faith is a shallow faith that only believes, we will soon revert to our habitual nature of self-exaltation. Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by the dream because it revealed that his kingdom was temporary. So he sought to defy the God who had said through Daniel, *“The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” Daniel 2:45.* He made an image totally of gold, visible as far as the eye could see, and ordered all his subjects to come to the plain of Dura to worship the statue (which would mean that they worshipped Nebuchadnezzar).
3. The association of music with worship.
Yahweh is worshipped with music in heaven (see Revelation 5:8, 9; 14:2, 3:15:2, 3). Babylon is also associated with *‘all kinds of music’* (13:5, 10) for it is ruled by Satan, the prince of this earth. God has said that the music of Babylon will be destroyed in the end (Revelation 18:22).

The Call to Worship and the Penalty for Disobedience: Daniel 3:5-7

“You shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The Choice in Worship: Worship God or Worship Satan (Babylon, Self) – Daniel 3:8-15

“There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” (3:12)

The Choice of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: Daniel 3:16-18

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

We have no need to answer you in this matter...when our hearts are fixed on God we have already made our choices. We are not thrown into sudden confusion about what choice we are to make.

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego we find the example of faithfulness to an earthly king, but the first priority of all these men was faithfulness to Jehovah. When the will of Jehovah conflicts with that of earthly powers and governments, our way is plain: God comes first.

*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. **But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods...***

And God calls us too, to be faithful unto death. If death is the punishment of earthly powers, we must still know and proclaim that God has our first loyalty. We know that the three Hebrew men were saved from death. But they did not know that; they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. They knew what God required of them.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." Deuteronomy 6:6-8

God was not primarily speaking of literal wearing of His words. He was conveying to His people that they should be totally committed mind, body and spirit to Him.

Saved from the Fiery Trial: Daniel 3:19-25

These three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his [d]counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (3:23-25)

God sent His Son to walk with His faithful children in the fiery furnace. He will also walk with us in our trials; through trials He enlarges our spiritual understanding and vision.

If we are called to be 'faithful unto death', we can be certain that God will walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death and that He will give us the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

When I call, answer me, O God of my righteousness: in pressure thou hast enlarged me; be gracious unto me, and hear my prayer. Psalm 4:1

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you. 1 Peter 4:12-14

Nebuchadnezzar's Response: Daniel 3:26-30

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! (3:28)

1. He acknowledges and blesses the God of Judah.
2. He acknowledges that their God is mighty to save.
3. He acknowledges the faith of the three Hebrews.
4. He acknowledges that their faith led to commitment of their entire selves – body, soul and spirit.
5. He acknowledges that worship is related to service – they served the God they worshipped.

In the time of the end, God's people will face the same issue: Who shall we worship? Jehovah Himself or the Beast, the Great Dragon Satan and any ideology he sets up in the kingdom of this world? Our decision will have eternal consequences. *'All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'* Rev 13:8. If our hearts are in heaven, if our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, we shall say, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that we do not love our lives unto the death, for our eternal life is hid with Christ.

Conclusion:

In the light of Daniel 3, how shall we then live today?

Live for a cause greater than yourself: in other words, live for Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

Know what you believe: do not even consider choices that are forbidden by God's Word.

Expect conflict: if you live by godly principles, not everyone will understand. Your high standards may make others so uncomfortable that they may reject you.

Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him: decide to follow His direction without regard to the results of obedience. He is with you no matter what happens and He is absolutely in control of all that happens in this world.

May the prayer of the persecuted David be ours today:

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise.

I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations.

For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth. Psalm 57:7-11
