

Daniel 3

LORDSHIP AND WORSHIP: Its Conflict and Conquest

Intro:

As we move through the book of Daniel we encounter many aspects of prophecy and history which deal with one central question:

WHO IS RULING?

That in turn brings us to look at the theme purpose of the Book of Daniel:

4:17 states that purpose –

“to the intent that the living may know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.”

Chapter 3 is a major statement in declaring that purpose.

Chapter 3 deals with the issue of Lordship. It responds to such questions as:

- Who is Lord?
- Is there room in life for more than one Lord?
- Are there times in life to rationalize away faithfulness to proper Lordship?
- Is obedience to proper Lordship more important than self-preservation?
- Is genuine Lordship determined by the ABILITY of the One called Lord – OR by the WILL of the one choosing a lord?

THE BIBLE HAS THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION

Now look at these key verses:

- 3:1-5 (esp. v 4-5) - “To you it is commanded...that..you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.”
- v 7 – “Therefore...all the people...fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”
- V 12 – READ
- V 14-15 READ

-- v 16-18 READ

-- V 28 READ

Now there are five subjects we will study in this matter of Worship and Lordship: Its Conflict and Conquest –

- I. ALTERNATIVES TO PURE WORSHIP v 1-7
- II. ABSOLUTES IN PURE WORSHIP – 8-18
- III. ANGER IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP – v 19-23
- IV. ASTONISHMENT IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP – v 24-25
- V. ADMIRATION IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP – v 26-30

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I. ALTERNATIVES TO PURE WORSHIP

-- READ v 1-7

1. Produced by Human Defiance –

-- v 1 “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold...”

-- In ch. 2 Nebuchadnezzar was the “head” of gold. It obviously, even in light of his worship of Daniel, did not take him long to become dissatisfied with just being the head.

-- The human heart will either honor the revelation of god or defy it.

2. Popularized by Human Pomp.

-- READ v 2-3

-- Bring in the “Big Shots” – It is a method still used today.

As long as they are famous it matters not what they believe, or don’t believe, or how they act.

Just get them to lend their image.

- I ask you – IS THAT NOT WHAT MODERN RELIGION IS DOING WITH OUR WORSHIP OF THE PERSONALITY CULT?
- We have produced a polluted form of American Christianity with the BIG SHOT personality stuff.
- Otherwise well-meaning Christians no longer decry the abuse of our Lord’s Day (the distraction of our worship) by the BIG SHOTS of Baseball, Football, Hockey, Golf, Tennis.

We instead show pride when after abusing the Lord’s Day and worship they refer to God and Mother.

We no longer question the personal morality of the preacher, the musician, the politician, as long as they talk the talk of religion.

- Alternatives to Pure Worship are today prompted by the pomp of the popular.
- Dr. Bill Bennett stated a result of our problem this way: “America is a place...where heroism is often confused with celebrity, honor with fame, true achievement with popularity, individual respect with political correctness.” (IMPRIMIS, Dec. 1998. Vol. 27. No. 12, p.1)

Nebuchadnezzar knew the process.

But not only are Alternatives to Pure Worship:

1. Produced by Human Defiance and
2. Popularized by Human Pomp. They are also
- 3. Presented with Human Arrogance.**

- READ v 4-5
- Here is the Arrogance of control – Religious fascism. Do worship our way if you want to stay alive in our culture and kingdom.
- Worship by command.

-- Interestingly enough we came close to that in the American Colonies. It was government decreed worship – forced taxation to support the established church.

That forced government sanctioned “church” led our forefathers to demand our First Amendment, the cornerstone of our National Bill of Rights.

Worship by Human Fiat is not acceptable. Furthermore it is not possible – for true worship always comes from the heart.

-- But not only are Alternatives to Pure Worship:

1. Produced by Human Arrogance and
2. Popularized by Human POMP and
3. Presented with Human Arrogance, it is also

4. Promoted By Human Threat.

-- v 6-7

-- Do worship my way if you want to stay alive in my kingdom.

- Nebuchadnezzar did it.
- The Romans did it.
- The Muslims still do it.
- And Americans do it –

With the threat of

-- Social, economic, professional and intellectually ostracism. (Loss of job, promotion, club membership)

- You will lose your standing in the company.
- Your committee appointments in the Congress.
- Your funding from the National Party
- Your job

-- Nebuchadnezzar’s philosophy is what some of you run into when you encounter the extortion of the United Way, the “your boy will not play on my team if you take him to church on Sunday.”

-- etc.

Now in the Matter of Lordship and Worship, there is not only the matter of

I. ALTERNATIVES TO PURE WORSHIP – v 1-7, there is also the

II. ABSOLUTES IN PURE WORSHIP

V 8-18 – Some of the absolutes are negative.

1. There will be Personal Intolerance.

-- READ v 8-12 (Accent our Bill of Rights)

2. There will be subtle seduction

-- v 13-14

-- Nebuchadnezzar conceals his rage and fury, and tempts Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego on the relationship they held with him as king.

-- v 14 - “Do not you serve **my** gods, nor worship the gold image which **I** have set up?”

(I am thinking, don’t you want to be in good standing with me? Don’t you see how you could insult me if you do not worship my gods also.)

-- Popularity with the king, or the class, or the team, or the neighbor, or the boss is still an issue in maintaining pure worship. One Absolute in the conflict of pure worship is that you will face the subtle seduction of those who would draw you from it.

But in this listing of Absolutes in Pure Worship, There is not only

-- open criticism and
-- subtle seduction

3. There will also be Pagan Sarcasm

-- v 15 – READ and Accent:

“And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”

- When Paganism cannot exalt its own gods it will surely seek to discredit Heaven’s.
- Pharaoh said to Moses: “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice.” (Ex 5:2)
- Pagan Sarcasm is not limited to the public enemies of god, it is also found among false friends:

ILL Quote

- In an article entitled “Heresy in the Early Church” Harold O.J. Brown says,

“It is a curious fact about Christianity that it is the only major religion [in which those who are its] paid, full-time priests, prelates, and professors spend much time and energy trying to show that it is false and should be totally changed or perhaps even abandoned.” (“Heresy in the Early Church” in TABLETALK, pub. By Ligonier Ministries, Lake Mary, FL., April 1994, Vol. 18. No. 4. P. 9)

Now in this listing of Absolutes in Pure Worship there is not only:

- open criticism
- subtle seduction and
- pagan sarcasm

4. There will also be Confident Steadfastness (v 16-18)

- This Confident Steadfastness is seen in:

(1) The Instant Reply of Courage v 16

- v 16 - “We are not careful to answer you in this matter.”
- We don’t need to think this one over.
- Any hesitation here may be fatal to faithfulness.

(2) **The Affirmation of Divine Ability.**

-- Read v 17

(3) **The Rejection of Possible Compromise.**

-- READ v 18

-- These men drew the line over which they would not cross.

-- The Apostle Paul, in the face of tortuous trials, affirmed, "I will not faint."

-- What is not affirmed in advance will be compromised in adversity.

-- In facing the possible "BUT IF NOT" (v 18) these men prepared for steadfastness with declaration: "WE WILL NOT." (v 18)

Now in the matter of Pure Worship we have seen:

I. ALTERNATIVES TO PURE WORSHIP – v 1-7

II. ABSOLUTES IN PURE WORSHIP – v 8-18. We now look at

III. ANGER IN RESONSE TO PURE WORSHIP – v 19-23

-- As America becomes increasingly Pagan and anti-Christian, the message of Daniel 3 will become increasingly meaningful to the family of God.

-- There is something about the Supernatural that always infuriates the Natural.

-- READ 3:19-23

-- PAGANISM'S ANGER TOWARD PURE WORSHIP WILL AFFECT:

1. **The Pagan's Emotional Composure –**

-- v 19 "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury.." (fury = rage)

2. **The Pagan's External countenance**

-- v 19 – “...the form of his visage (face – and more) was changed.”

3. **The Pagan’s Extreme Commands** – v 19-23

-- v 19 – The furnace was to be heated to seven times its usual temperature.

-- v 20 The “most mighty” men were to cast the Jews into the furnace.

-- v 20-21 The Jews were to bound in their coats, their hose, their hats and their other garments.

-- Pure Worship has and will excite the anger of those opposed to God and Godliness.

-- Abel worshipped God properly and was killed by his brother Cain who worshipped God improperly.

-- Many of you are mocked, ridiculed, laughed at, scorned and left out, not because you worship God, BUT BECAUSE YOU WORSHIP GOD ONLY, AND PROPERLY.

Now in our study of Lordship and Worship: Conflict and Conquest, we have studied

I. ALTERNATIVES TO PURE WORSHIP – v 1-7

II. ABSOLUTES IN PURE WORSHIP – v 8-18

III. ANGER IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP – v 19-23

Now we look at

IV. ASTONISHMENT IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP v 24-27

1. **Astonishment at the Personal Presence of God v 24-25**
2. **Astonishment at the Fullness of Freedom from God v 25**
3. **Astonishment at the Servant's Devotion to God v. 26**
4. **Astonishment at the prevailing Protection By God v 27**

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1. Astonishment at the Personal Presence of God. V 24-25

- God has made numerous promises to be here to be with His people.
- In Jerusalem, at about this same time, a parallel story was taking place:
 - The Remnant of the Jews:

- (1) Were asking for a word from God. Jer. 42:2-3
- (2) Were making promises about their devotion to God v 5-6
- (3) Were getting clear promises from God v 9-12 (accent v 11)
- (4) Were getting a clear warning from God. V 13-19 (They were not allowed to rely on others)
- (5) Were getting a clear rebuke from God v 22

- The Jews had been taught to sing –

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

(Psalm 20:7)

- These people did not listen. They ran for cover.
- But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted.
They had pure worship.

And God showed up. The Hebrews were delivered and the pagan was astonished.

- Earlier Isaiah the prophet had said, *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned...* (Isa. 43:2)
- Isaiah 42:6 *I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.* (Nebuchadnezzar the Gentile was beginning to see the light.)
- David the king had taught these people to sing,

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, will fear no evil, for you are with me...
(Psalm 23:4)

- Now not only was there:
Astonishment at the Personal Presence of God,
there was also

2. Astonishment at the Fullness of Freedom of God.

- v. 24 Nebuchadnezzar's question:

*"Did we not cast three men bound...?
They answered and said, 'True, O King.'"*

- v 25 – The king answered and said,

I see four men loose, walking...

- These men experienced the victory of being unshackled. They were not only loose, but they were walking. They not only received the freedom but they exercised it. They not only exercised it, but they displayed it.
- The Bible speaks of our being "freed from sin." (Romans 6:7) Our problem is that often when we are freed from sin – we don't walk.

- Nebuchadnezzar was astonished at the fullness of freedom these men had from God.

As a child of God - I am free to walk:

- to walk away from sin, from its consequences, from its tempting and seduction and entrapments.
- Nebuchadnezzar had sought to enslave. God delivered. Nebuchadnezzar was foiled.

Now not only was there –

- Astonishment at the Personal Presence of God, and
- Astonishment at the Fullness of the Freedom of God, there was also

3. Astonishment at the Servant's Devotion to God.

To have a Sincere Devotion to an inferior god is acceptable but not astonishing to a pagan.

To have an insincere Devotion to the Sovereign God is acceptable but not astonishing to a pagan.

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged

(1) The Sincerity Of Their Devotion

- *Ye servants*
- No mere religious profession.

(2) The Superiority of their God.

- He is The Sovereign One.

But to have a sincere Devotion to the Sovereign God produces results which astonish even pagan kings.

- But not only was there –

- Astonishment at the Personal Presence of God,
and
- Astonishment at the Fullness of the Freedom of
God, and
- Astonishment at the Servant's Devotion to God,
there was also

4. Astonishment at the Prevailing Protection by God.

-- v 25 *I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, AND
THEY HAVE NO HURT...*

-- v. 27 *And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's
counselors...saw these men,*

-- *upon whose bodies the fire had no power,*

-- *nor was a hair of their head singed,*

-- *neither were their coats changed,*

-- *nor the smell of fire had passed on them.*

-- *That is what God meant in Isaiah 42:6 when He said I will
hold your hand*

*and that is what He meant in Isa 43:2 when He said
when you walk through the fire you shall not be
burned.*

-- *And that is what David meant when he said to God - Though
I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear
no evil: for you are with me... (Psalm 23:4)*

-- Our God is not a "SQUEEZE BY" God. His people
are not winners by a "close margin."

-- When Israel went through the Red Sea, they
went through on DRY GROUND. The
Egyptians drowned there a short time later.

-- When the lame man was healed, he not only
arose and walked, but he took up his bed.

-- Namaan was not only healed of leprosy, but his skin *came again like unto the flesh of a little child,...*

-- When that thief on the cross responded, he not only got forgiven, HE GOT PARADISE WITH THE SAVIOR.

-- When God made sacrifice for our sins, HE OUT-EXTREMED ALL OTHER EXTREMES

—

-- AND GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

-- And that is why God's people say

(2 Cor. 2:14) *Thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ.*

-- And that is why God's people say

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Rom. 8:37

-- Our God is not a squeeze-by God, He is a Magnificent Multiplier of Matchless Miracles.

-- We could all desire such a marvelous, matchless, provision of God.

-- It comes to those who have the commitment level expressed in v 16-18

-- Our God is able

-- But if not

-- We will not serve pagan gods.

We come now to a study of

V. ADMIRATION IN RESPONSE TO PURE WORSHIP v 28-30

-- This study of admiration comes from a pagan king.

It is divided into four parts:

1. **An Expression Of Particular Praise. V 28**
2. **The Observation Of Practiced Purity V 28**
3. **Rejection Of Powerless Prejudice V 29**
4. **The Reward Of Personal Promotion V 30**

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In this admiration in response to pure worship, we look first at

1. **An Expression of Particular praise v 28**

-- NOTE THE PARTICULARS

- (1) The praise was verbalized.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake...

- (2) The praise was specific with reference to the identity of God.

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego...

- (3) The praise was specific with reference to the action of God.

- i. He sent His angel.

- ii. He delivered His servants.

- iii. He changed the king's word. (He over-ruled Nebuchadnezzar's decree.

Ex. 15:1 *Moses sang, I will sing unto the lord for He has triumphed*

*gloriously: the horse and his rider
hath he thrown into the sea.*

We often like pagans, do not praise God specifically. There are reasons:

- i. Our absence of Biblical knowledge keeps us from recognizing the action of God.
- ii. Our absence of mutual sharing makes us unaccustomed to praising God.
(Nebuchadnezzar learned to praise God specifically because he had listened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.)
- iii. Our absence of specific prayer for the action of God.
 - 90% of professing Christians make major decisions without consulting God.
 - *Fewer than 10% of church going Christians make important life decisions based on god's Word and seeking His will.* (Cymbala, *Fresh Faith*, p.77)

2. The observation of practiced purity.

- v 28 *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego... Who yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*
- matter that this pagan king observed, that which he admired in those he sought to kill, is that their purity of worship meant more to them than the presence of life.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego allowed their bodies to become sermons that Nebuchadnezzar understand.

- The Bible says to us – *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God... (Romans 6:13)*
- James 1:27 *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to keep himself unspotted from the world.*
- Then there is the challenge of Romans 12:1-2
I beseech you therefore...by the mercies of God...
- And the example of the faithful Biblical servant in 1 Cor. 9:27
I bring and keep my body into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.
- And the high mark of demand –
Be holy for I am holy
Lev. 20:7, I Peter 1:15-16
- Now this admiration of pure worship is not only seen in
 - An expression of particular praise and
 - The observation of practiced purity,
It is also seen in

3. The Rejection Of Powerless Prejudice

- v 29 (READ the entire verse)
- When God speaks, we must listen.

When we listen, we must act.
 - Regardless of how strongly we may be attached to our prejudices, when those prejudices are wrong, we must acknowledge that we are wrong.
- It was time for Nebuchadnezzar to change his attitude and his ways.

His decree came quickly

- Now it is not God's command for us to act with the death decree severity of Nebuchadnezzar, but there is the truth that sin is to be radically rejected.
- There is to be NO courtship with evil – and the possibility of compromise is to be removed from the scene.
- But this admiration of pure worship is not only seen in
 - An expression of pure praise and
 - The observation of practiced purity and
 - The rejecting of powerless prejudice, it is also seen in

4. **The Reward Of Personal Promotion** – (Prosperity)

v 30 *Then the king promoted (aramaic = caused to prosper) Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.*

- May I remind you that the Bible says:

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

Joshua 1:8

Conclusion

That is a look at the beauty of Lordship and Worship: Its Conflict and Conquest.

The question it raises for me is the issue of Conflict or Conquest – and whether or not I have chosen the path to victory in serving Christ as Lord.

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