

The False Worship of Babylon Contrasted with the True Worship of Scripture

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...a young man today who did tap into that power by name, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There is controversy over how you pronounce the last one. Some say A-bed'-ne-go, some say A-bed-ne'-go. It doesn't really matter. We are going to look at Daniel chapter three for those who need to know where this account is found.

The book of Daniel is a book that has caused itself much controversy and I believe personally because it is such a valuable book that liberal theologians have sought to undermine its authenticity and its historical and its right to be in the canon of Scripture. But we believe God is sovereign and we believe that God protects his Word. And I think when you look at Daniel and the more you read Daniel and I know that there is some at least looking at this book at the moment and the more you read it, the more you see why Satan and the world and liberal theologians would want to undermine it because it is so full of practical and what it is to really follow God in a practical sense, what it is to really lay your life on the altar, on the living altar as a living sacrifice and what it means not just to have a head knowledge about certain things about God and about religion and so on, but what it is to know the power of God.

Daniel probably is one of the few books in all of the Bible that really gives us a look at what it means to practically walk with God. Many pastors and many books will tell us all about it and yet they are all good and the actually are helpful, but Daniel holds a special place in that shows us and not just...and one of the interesting things with Daniel is it shows about young people. It shows us how young people stood for God.

In the fall of man when God was there Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and they stood for their God in the most severe of circumstances.

I want to read together in this account of the fiery furnace or the burning furnace that these three men were faced with. And we will read from verse one of Daniel chapter three. We will just read a few verses into it because we will be going over the verses so I don't want to take too much time even though it is always good to read the Word of God. We will read from verse one of chapter three just down to verse seven.

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king

sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.¹

That is an interesting passage to try and read as there is so much repetition in it. And I think that is part of the lesson and that itself which we will get into in a couple of minutes.

Here we have this king, this Nebuchadnezzar who had decided to make an image. And many commentators feel that the reason he was or did make this image was because of the events of the previous chapter which Daniel refers to Nebuchadnezzar, to the king as the image. So therefore Nebuchadnezzar said, “Well, if I am an image in a vision I am going to be an image in reality.”

Some disagree as whether this actual image was of Nebuchadnezzar. Some think it was an image of one of the gods of Babylon and so on. There is not...there's differences of views what exactly the image was, but we will get into that again as well in a minute.

But the most important thing to realize and obviously notice is that the king was making this image and everyone was commanded to worship it. No one was to be left out.

I want to contrast today the false worship of Babylon with the true worship of Israel or the people of God, a contrast between the false worship of Babylon and the true worship of Israel.

It is interesting that Babylon is mentioned from the very first book in the Bible to the last book in the Bible. There seems to be this constant conflict between Babylon and the people of God whether we say that Israel is the Church or whether we use the same time, whatever. There is this constant battle between Babylon—we read of the Tower of Babel where God himself came down and confounded the people who were trying to make this tower.

¹ Daniel 3:1-7

So we have this battle between Babylon worship and true worship. And I want to say a few things, first of all, about this Babylonian type of worship.

What is wrong with this worship of Babylon? Let's look at verse one. This worship is wrong, first of all, because it is based on the work of a man. It is established upon the work of a man. The very reason in the Tower of Babel as why they wanted to build this tower that would reach to heaven, or, as many commentators would say, not that it reached to heaven, but literally inside of it, it wasn't so much a high tower as so much that inside when you walked inside you saw the starry hosts. It was the idea of bringing heaven down. Really, the Babylonians and those who built the Tower of Babel were star worshippers and planet worshippers and so on. They were the original astrologers and they worshipped the starry host.

But this worship is wrong because it is built upon the work of man or men. Nebuchadnezzar, as we read in verse one, was the one that made, not literally, but he was the one that decided that this image should be built and he oversaw its building.

In contrast with that in Revelation 14 we are told by the angels to "Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."²

And in Psalm 95, "Let us kneel before the LORD our maker."³

Romans one verse 25 says they "Served the creature more than the Creator."⁴

So Babylonian worship is typified, first of all, by the fact that it is based upon the work of the creature. Jeremiah criticized them, makes fun of those who take a tree and they cut it down and the fashion it into an idol. Then they take some of the wood, they use it to cook their food with it and then they worship the work of their hands. And it is silly. It is presented in the Bible as a silly thing. They worship the work of their own hands. What sense does that make? They are worshipping themselves. Babylonian worship is the worship of self.

It is the exact opposite of true biblical worship. We worship God, why? Because he made us. That makes sense. That is logical. Babylonian worship is based upon the works of men.

And, secondly, it is in direct disobedience to the law of God. Exodus 20. Turn with me very quickly because I want to point out one thing in Exodus 20. Exodus chapter 20 and verses four to six is where it deals with the prohibition of the making of images, the prohibition of the making of images. Exodus 20 verses four to six:

² Revelation 14:7

³ Psalm 95:6

⁴ Romans 1:25

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: 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.⁵

You see what it says there, the last statement of verse five, that those who make idols hate God. That is a strong statement. Those who make idols hate God according to God himself. He says, “If you make an idol, that shows you hate me.”

So Babylonian worship is typified not only because it is based upon the work of man, but because it is a direct action of hatred towards God. Again, it is the exact opposite of we are told to love the Lord our God. Babylonian worship is typified by an act of hate.

Thirdly, it is a form of worship that is organized by a man. Look at verse two of Daniel chapter three. “[He] sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”⁶

So it is a worship that is not only based on the work of man, the worship that is typified by hatred towards God, but it is also a form of worship that is organized by man. Many today say the Bible doesn’t tell us how to worship. And the reason they say that is because they want to have their own form. But the Church is called to stick rigidly to what God has ordained for his worship.

I’m probably...that was too simplistic. You know, reading the Bible, just singing, just praying, preaching, it is all too simple. And that is how God has organized it.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to have all the best people. He wants the princes, the governors and the captains which brings us on to another point, that this Babylonian worship looks for important—quote, unquote—important people to participate. There’s eight categories as we have mentioned. And this was thought to be something that would give credence and respectability to the worship. And we often see in the big churches you have these men with their beautiful robes and jewelry and their big staff and their big hats and this is all meant to give a degree of legitimacy. You know, “We must be right. Look at all this pomp and ceremony. It must be right.”

And Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to make his worship look legitimate by having all the important people, to bring the poor people under the impression that, “Well, if all these people are doing it, it must be right. If they are all involved in it, well, then, we should just follow with them.”

⁵ Exodus 20:4-5

⁶ Daniel 3:2

And then also notice some of the people [?] men. If the judge is going [?] is going [?] about coming to court some day and he sees [?] involved in this well then maybe I won't fair as well as I might otherwise so maybe it would be in my own interest to be involved in this worship.

And that is how even Christianity fell in the Middle Ages, in the Dark Ages. I think Woodsworth calls it the glorious age for that. I think those who look at it from a biblical point of view see that the Dark Ages when religion became something that was oppressive, the Christian religion almost in its entirety under Catholicism became oppressive. And if you wanted the garment white, if you wanted to have a good job, if you wanted to be accepted and if you didn't want to die, you got involved in this worship.

So all the people of influence, authority and respect were called by Nebuchadnezzar to this.

In contrast what does James tell us? James chapter two. You needn't turn to it. Just listen.

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.⁷

Nebuchadnezzar was certainly guilty of that. And Babylonian worship is typified as that type of worship that gives elevation and respect and indeed adoration to men.

Fifthly, it is a form of worship that does not require a unity of doctrine or faith or conviction. Look at verse three, Daniel three verse three. "Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."⁸

⁷ James 2:1-9

⁸ Daniel 3:3

The provinces here is somewhere in the region of 130 provinces, huge, huge area colossal geographical expanse. And these were rulers from all different cultures, all different languages, all different people. And there would have been a multitude, a variety of views. But Babylonian worship is typified by the fact that it does not require any unity of doctrine or faith or convictions.

But that isn't to say that Christian worship and Christian worshipers always agree on everything. Certainly we are not. But there is...there must be a clear biblical basis of unity. We can't worship together if we reject the deity of Christ. We can't worship together if we say that salvation is by grace with a little bit of works added in. There must be certain things, foundational biblical principles that we agree on in order for us to worship together. That is what makes the present ecumenical movement a Babylonian type of movement rather than a biblical movement. Certainly we believe in biblical ecumenism. We do believe in that, biblically coming together, trying to find a w one mind, trying to find a unity of mind in the Scripture, but not a unity that is not based on the Scripture. But this Babylonian worship is typified by the fact that really what you believe is irrelevant. It doesn't matter if you believe the snake was God or the tree was God. Just once you fell down and worship this image.

Again, in contrast, Ephesians four tells us:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.⁹

It is also a form of worship that is based on man's commands, verses four and five.

Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.¹⁰

Simply obedience to a man and a man made command.

Whereas we worship by God's command. Psalm 45 tells us, "For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."¹¹

We are here today hopefully because we believe God has called us here, because God has said, "Come to this place," not literally to these four walls, but to this place where this church meets together. And when we come on a Sunday morning we say that we are calling to a place where God is calling us to. If it is anything less than that it is not right and we need to come on that basis, that this is the place where God have us, not where our family would have us, you know, even though if you are a child and you need to obey

⁹ Ephesians 4:4-6

¹⁰ Daniel 3:4-5

¹¹ Psalm 45:11

your parents, but how much more important is it for us to come because we believe God has called us to the place whereas this people were just going to do it because a man had called them to do it.

Also, Babylonian worship is typified by the fact that it is not a voluntary worship, a forced under threat of death.

Verse six says, “And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”¹² A tremendous religion, this, isn’t it? There was not much option or not much scope for them for discussion on this. You either bow down when you hear the music or you burn. There’s your choice.

Christian worship is the opposite. John four tells us, “They that worship him must worship him in spirit.”¹³ This is important. God never threatens anyone to worship him. God never tells any one that, you know, he never presents his worship or another way of saying it is that God’s worship is not a way of getting to please God. This is important because I think there can be a misunderstanding about what Christian worship is sometimes. I think we all can misunderstand it, including me. It is that we worship God not because we think this makes God happy. We worship God because we are compelled to by an impression of his glory, his beauty and what he has done for us. And that is an important distinction. I might not be presenting it in a very clear way, but it is important to realize that worshipping God does not pacify God. Christ pacifies God in the cross. Christ propitiated for our sins. We don’t worship in order to get God happy with us. That is what religion says. And people would have done this, what Nebuchadnezzar said, because whether...if we do this, that makes Nebuchadnezzar happy. But that is not the reason we worship God.

The only worship God wants is a worship that comes from within us. It is our worship. It is coming from within us and we feel it. And we want to give it. There is no outer force compelling us.

Really the Lord Jesus Christ would have said, “God, they that worship him because they really want to.” That would be a very sort of loose translation, but I think that would be the same thing. To worship God in spirit means you really want to.

What does the modern hymn say? “We really want to love you, Lord. We really want to praise your name.” That is the essence of what this is saying that we really want to worship God.

What a false worship is the Babylonian type. All Nebuchadnezzar was an outward obedience. He wasn’t after the heart of these people. God wants nothing less and nothing more than the heart which brings us onto our next point.

¹² Daniel 3:6

¹³ John 4:24

Babylonian worship is typified because it is a mechanical and purely physical form of worship. Look at verse seven. Verse seven almost reads like a comedy. “Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages [just like puppets], fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”¹⁴

“Oh, there it is again. We will fall down and worship. Oh, there it is again. We must fall down in worship.”

And I am certain such that it was. You remember...I remember clearly [?] this is the point where we kneel. This is the point where we stand. This is the point where we sit. This is the point where we go or we can't wait to get out.

You know, and it was all physical, it was purely physical actions that we knew we had to do because that was the time to do it. And that isn't how we come into God's house or a place where we worship God and do whatever we want although sometimes looking at my case I think that is true.

But anyway, you know, it isn't purely physical. And that is what Babylonian worship was, a physical form of worship based upon man's commands.

Biblical worship is a heart issue. This people were willing to give an empty, outward devotion, but there was three, there was three men who would rather give their bodies to the flames than offend a God who possessed their hearts. And these three men were different. These men did not want to give a form of worship that would offend the God that they loved and that they worshipped in the heart.

Just...I am not forgetting John 4:23, but I don't want to misquote it. Just turn over with me briefly. John 4:23, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”¹⁵

Isn't that a beautiful picture that God is on the lookout, God is searching hearts and there is a certain type of heart that God seeks to worship him. It is the true worship. It is the worship that comes from the inner man. It is the worship that is not in any way dependent upon outward circumstances. It is a worship that so fills a person that it doesn't matter what people think. It doesn't matter what people say. It doesn't matter what the consequence is. This worship must come because it comes from the very soul.

One of the things that the [?] in days of British rule used to say, you know, you can kill us, you can do whatever, but you can't do anything to the passion we have in the heart. And that is true for the Christian. The world can do whatever it wants, but it can't do anything about what is in here. For the true Christian, he is unapproachable. He is invincible. We are more than conquerors. That is what the Scripture tells us, through him who loved us. Why? Because the world cannot deal with what is in here. It is a whole

¹⁴ Daniel 3:7

¹⁵ John 4:23

different playing field. The world concentrates on what is outward and the world is satisfied with the outward.

“Fading are the worlding’s pleasures.” Isn’t that what the hymn tell us? “All his boasted pomp and show, solid joys and lasting treasures, none but Zion’s children know.”

We are in a different kingdom. Pilate didn’t understand this. Jesus said, “If my kingdom were of this world...”¹⁶ But it is not. He didn’t understand.

Babylonian worship only looks for the outward. Also, this worship will bring persecution on the Church, verses eight to 12. This worship will bring persecution. This false Babylonian worship.

Wherefore at that time [verse eight] certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews...¹⁷

And we will stop there. We will come to that in a minute.

This worship does not change the heart. There’s five things we learn from these men, these Chaldeans. First of all they were accusers like Satan. They were accusers in verse eight. “Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.”¹⁸ This worship did nothing for their ability to love other people. It only gave them an ability accuse others.

Secondly, they were flatters. “O king live forever.”¹⁹ That is just a way of flattering the king.

Thirdly, they were users. Verse 10, “Thou, O king...”²⁰ They were going to use the king. “You made this decree and we want to use this against you to get rid of these men that we hate.”

Fourth, they were murderers. They knew that when they brought this to the king that it would end in the king’s taking the life of these men, at least they thought it would.

And, fifth, they were envious. We get to really the point here in verse 12. They were envious. These were Chaldeans, [?] men, but these were men who were the same

¹⁶ John 18:36

¹⁷ Daniel 3:8-12

¹⁸ Daniel 3:8

¹⁹ Daniel 3:9

²⁰ Daniel 3:10

nationality as Nebuchadnezzar and they thought they should be in the position that these three men were. These men were in high office and in a place that was respected and they had a jealousy of these men. They were envious and they wanted to see them gone.

“There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”²¹

They weren't concerned about the religious issue. They were only concerned that these men the king has set up in positions and we want that position. We want that place. These men shouldn't be in it. They weren't honest. They were lawyers. [?]. No they were lawyers [?]. They were lawyers. They weren't being honest with the king. They pretended it was a religious issue, but really just wanted the place of the three men.

You can almost imagine if Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had have been thrown into the furnace as they were and died you can almost imagine what happened the next day. “O king, live forever. We are back again and we would just like to remind you that we were the men who told you about these three men that burned yesterday in the fire. And, you know, we would just like to find out who you think deserves to take their place.” And their agenda was not for the good of the king, but the good of themselves.

Finally, on this point at least and provides a jealous and envious spirit. And we have already looked at that in verse 12.

Babylonian worship is false because it starts with man, it is for man and it ends with man. It is all based on man whereas when we come to Christian it is all for him, in him and for the praise of his glory.

Let us now look briefly and consider the true worship of the people of God. First of all we see in verse 12 that this worship there is no regard or place given to men. They were telling something true in once sense. They say in verse 12, “O king, have not regarded thee.”²²

Now this can be misinterpreted. It does not mean that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had no respect for the king. That is not what they are saying. It does not mean that, you know, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were saying, “Ah, well, you know, we don't really care what the king says.” It wasn't that sort of attitude. But when it came down to the important issue of worship, if Nebuchadnezzar was going to say something that was wrong and command something that was wrong, then they would not regard it. Just like Paul in the acts when he said, “You will not preach in this name.” Or, sorry, was that Peter? That was Peter wasn't it? Yeah. When Peter was told and the other apostles were told, “You are not to preach in this name,” what did they say? “Should we listen to you or to God?”

²¹ Daniel 3:12

²² Ibid.

But they weren't being disrespectful. But when they were being told to do something that was against their conscience and against Scripture they said, "No." Respectfully they said, "No," but they said, "No."

We talked about this briefly coming down in the car this morning, talked about the government. And this was what I said to the children. When should you not do what the government says? And like that was sort of striking for them because [?] what the government says. And the point is when the government says we should do something contrary to the Word of God, then we are not only right, but we are actually, we are actually under biblical command to refuse to do what the government says.

But that rarely happens. That rarely happens. It certainly is not an excuse to become rebellious. It certainly is not an excuse to become anti establishment in our views. Christians are commanded to pray for our country, pray for our leaders. But one thing you see in our society is disrespect for politicians. And the media love to hate and when they find something bad about a politician they love to sort of take advantage of it and [?] strike them. Christians are commanded to respect their leaders even if we don't agree with their politics, we are commanded to respect them. That is not saying that these...we are saying that these men did respect Nebuchadnezzar insofar as he was put there by God, but they did not regard him in the sense that they would not do something that was against conscience.

As Luther said to the pope, "To go against conscience is neither right nor safe."

Secondly, this true worship rejects all other false worship and idolatrous worship. Verse 12, the Chaldeans say this and rightly, "They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."²³

True biblical worship rejects all false and idolatrous worship. 1 John five is the very last verse of this the apostle John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, the very last statement in 1 John five, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."²⁴ That's a strange way to finish out the letter, isn't it? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."²⁵

And I wonder. Is, you know, you can't help making this application. It is very easy for us to say, "Well, you know, the idols are those statues outside of churches we see and God, you should keep us out from them that they should not be things that we anymore respect or things that we reject," and that is right, rightfully so. But I wonder is there other ones, you know, that we might put in its place.

I found it easier to throw out a statue of Mary out of your bedroom than the pictures of the others. You know, the statues of Mary went immediately, The pictures of the others stayed for a number of years. But they are both idols. They are both absolutely idols. And it needs to be gotten rid of.

²³ Daniel 3:12

²⁴ 1 John 5:20

²⁵ Ibid.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”²⁶

Why? Acts 15 tells us. The first Church council—you needn’t turn to it—the first Church council. And the council met together to decide [?] to be at the Gentiles.

“The Gentiles were being saved, you know, what are we going to do? This is...we weren’t expecting this. This is a new [?] for the books. The Gentiles are being converted to Christ. Well, you know, how do we deal with this? We just have to deal with the people of God.”

And after they had met the council of the elders, the apostles and so on they had a few instructions. Well, one of the instructions was that they should abstain from the pollution of idols and how important it is that we don’t have any idols in our life. We all have them. I mean I still have them.

That’s the other thing that I need to get rid of. There are still things that I need....It is very hard sometimes to get into the car and not put on QFM instead of putting on a good tape. You know, sometimes I just want to...I just want to get into the car and not sort of really be...and maybe sometimes my mind does need a break, yet, undoubtedly. But it is so much easier to stick on 98 FM and listen to that for a half an hour than to listen to a good message.

Physically both are as easy to do, it is just as easy to put in a good message into the tape recorder as it is to turn on the radio. But emotionally it is more difficult to listen to the Christian message. But the benefits, obviously, are far different.

True worship will make us the enemy of the promoters of false worship, verse 13. “Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”²⁷

Nebuchadnezzar was silly, wasn’t he? Here were three men who had proven ability, who had proved to be faithful to him. And he had created a situation where they were going to lose their lives as many would have passed. This was stupid to create a situation where you are going to lose three of your best men. But he was so overcome with this issue which was pride in him that he hated these three men for what they had done or what they had not done.

Psalm two makes this statement. “Why do the heathen rage [in vain]?”²⁸ There is something about the Church that makes the true Church, that makes the world hate us. What is it? Jesus went around doing good. He healed the blind. He gave them sight. He enabled the lame to walk. He raised people from the dead and they did not only want to kill Jesus, they wanted to kill Lazarus as well. That doesn’t make sense.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Daniel 12:13

²⁸ Psalm 2:1

What is it that makes the world hate the Church?

And, you see, the only answer is that it is something spiritual. You see, there is no logical answer to that. The Church is the salt of the earth. If you look through history it has been Christians that have brought all the good institutions. Look at Wilberforce who was a politician in the British parliament in the 1800s or in the 1700s. And it was he that was the instrument that brought in the abolition of the slave trade in England. It was Christians who established a modern education system and it was Christians who brought even the modern democracy—although I'm sure many of them probably would regret that now, but in many ways—but all of the good things that we have in the world society and so on all began, the abolition of dictatorships has a lot of its roots in Christian activity. So it doesn't make sense that the ungodly world hates the Church.

The only answer is a spiritual one. There is a spiritual force. Men probably couldn't even answer themselves. The Lord Jesus had a period of popularity and the people began to hate him. He did nothing different in the second half of his ministry than the first half of his ministry. It is just that the people, not so much the people, but there was a realization that what Jesus was saying was more than just pleasant things, nice things. There was a moral responsibility attached to it. And the world doesn't like that. The world doesn't want to be morally responsible.

The apostles asked the same question as the psalmist in Acts four. After they had been punished by the Jews in Acts four they came out and all they could tell you was, "Why are they doing this?" And they quote Psalm two, "Why do the heathen rage in vain? Why do they plot together against God and his holy one, his anointed one?" And the question is, "Why do you [?]" It is because there is spiritual animosity between the world and the Church.

This commitment to true worship will bring also times of great testing, verse 15. "Now if ye be ready that at what time,"²⁹ the king says to them, "I'll give you another chance. Here is your last chance. If you do it you will live. If you don't do it, you die."

Nebuchadnezzar, I'm sure, didn't want to see these three men thrown into the furnace. He knew their value. They were an aid to him. They were a great help to him. They were men of ability. He didn't just want to waste them. So he gives them one more chance.

The Lord Jesus also experienced a similar test regarding worship. Matthew four says:

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is

²⁹ Daniel 3:15

written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.³⁰

One of the things the world can't understand about the Church and Christians is their fanatical interest in the Bible.

"You know, why do you read the Bible so much?"

I was out the other day. I told someone I had been reading the Bible for 15 years.

"Fifteen? One book? What's so special about the Bible?"

And I loved when he said that, you know. That's the point. The Bible is special. The Bible is different.

Frank reminded us then, reminded me, at least and I shall tell it publicly. It's just important to me. He reminded us of something J.B. had said a number of years. If the Bible is not true nothing matters. If the Bible is true nothing else matters. And that is what we believe, isn't it? The Bible is true. It is there for reading. Nothing else matters.

And the Lord Jesus didn't say to Satan, "Listen, Satan, you should know who I am." No. He could have said that. He said, "Listen, Satan, I am God in the flesh. Get thee hence."

No. The Son of God in the flesh used the Bible as his defense. He didn't...he was the Word. He is the living Word and yet the living Word used the written Word as his defense against the enemy.

And the three men of Daniel were just the same.

"We can't do this. Conscience and the Word of God constrains us, but we can't. And we would rather give our bodies to the flames than to compromise on this issue."

The spirit of true worship also will be accompanied by great boldness and courage. Verse 16. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter."³¹

They didn't say, "Oh, we are in trouble now. What are we going to say? We are in deep waters now. You know, there is the furnace. We can see it now. We are in trouble."

And they came in and said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't even have a prepared statement. We don't even have any clever words."

Great courage, great boldness. They knew what had to be done and they had decided that this is it. Nothing else. There is no cleverly devised words.

³⁰ Matthew 4:8-10

³¹ Daniel 3:16

Another translation says, “Oh Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.” They didn’t even come to defend themselves. They came to honor their God.

And this act of true worship will increase our faith, verse 17. “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.”³²

You see, they weren’t sure about the fire whether or not...they knew God was able to do it, but they knew one thing that was definite, that God would deliver them out of Nebuchadnezzar’s hand whether it was by life or death.

They will nurture...this worship will nurture conviction and steadfastness. “[Even if not, even if God doesn’t deliver us from the fire], be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”³³

And you can almost picture the scene. You can picture the [?] people gathered and these three men and say, “Listen, king. Our worship of our God does not depend on whether or not we are cast into a furnace. That is an irrelevant issue. Your threat does not bother us. Even if God does not save us.”

You see at that time everyone’s gods were gods because they thought they could help them. And, again, the religion that many of us were brought up in sort of taught us you had a saint for this, you had a saint for that and a saint for this would help you in this time of need and this other saint would help you in this other time of need and if you had this problem you would come to this person and so on. And that is what the whole religion was made up and the medals that kept you safe and the water that was meant to do things for you.

³² Daniel 3:17

³³ Daniel 3:18