

Nebuchadnezzar's Party

Daniel 3:1-30

Halifax, 21 April 2007

Introduction:

As some of you know, I was out of town last week for meetings with a committee of the Synod from Monday until Friday.

- The elders graciously insisted that as my schedule has been quite full lately,
 - I break from the Matthew series to preach some old sermons.
 - As we have been looking at how Jesus' enemies surrounded Him in our Matthew series,
 - I thought of a couple of sermons I preached in our Daniel series about four years ago that relate to this very theme...
 - These sermons are both about the world's parties and about how we must not be drawn in to celebrate what they are celebrating because we have our own party to attend.

Today, I want to tell you about the party that Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon had.

- He put it on when Babylon was at the height of its glory!
- Nebuchadnezzar was a very successful king, one of the most successful that ever lived!
 - Not only had he conquered the whole world in a military victory...
 - But by his remarkable policy, he had actually been able to bring the world together as one under his leadership.
 - Rather than merely conquering his enemies in war, he had managed to incorporate them into his empire.
 - He had taken the best and the brightest from every nation and brought them to serve in the highest positions of his empire!
 - Something grand and glorious was happening—the world was becoming one under his rule!
- And so at the height of his career,
 - he decided it was time to have a big party—
 - a party to celebrate the greatness of Babylon (and of himself).
- He spared no expense!
 - At the centre of the festivities was a huge image of gold that he set up.

- It was 30 metres high—the height of a ten story building...
- The word used in the original suggests that it was the image of man.
 - It represented the glory and the achievements of man!
- And did you notice when we read the passage how many times it is referred to as”
 - “the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up”?
 - It keeps repeating that over and over:
 - Six times in the first seven verses it repeats it.
 - This repetition is there for a reason.
 - This party was all about what Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
 - The image he set up represented the empire that he had set up.
 - This was a celebration of the City of Man established by man.
- It was a magnificent event!
 - Nebuchadnezzar had dignitaries from all the provinces of Babylon brought in.
 - He had musicians playing special music for the event.
 - Everyone was there, and everyone was to bow before the golden image at the centre of it all.

TRANS> Now I want you to consider first of all that:

I. The world delights in having big parties like this that celebrate the glory of man!

- Don't get the idea that most of the people here were struggling with all this!
 - There was an enthusiasm here that surpasses the enthusiasm you find at the Super Bowl or at a political rally.
 - This wasn't about one party or team against another as you have in those cases.
 - This was an event where everyone was on the same side!
 - This was about a newly established unity that people were delighted to be a part of!
 - Nebuchadnezzar had managed to bring them all together as one and they working together to make the most prosperous kingdom that had ever existed in the face of the earth.
- A. There is that great feeling of security and belonging that you get when everyone comes together for a common purpose!
 1. This sense of security is desperately sought out in a fallen world that is alienated

- from its Maker.
- a. We are such contrary people that it is often hard to achieve it,
 - but sometimes in a rising kingdom, there is a kind of snow ball effect...
 - people see that working together is benefiting them and they promote it and achieve it in remarkable ways.
 - b. Security comes in togetherness...
 - Everyone thinks:
 - “This must be right because everyone agrees—
 - We are all together in it—
 - What could possibly stop us now?”
 - c. It is the same feeling of security the men at Babel had in Genesis 11.
 - They too built a great structure to symbolise their power and unity.
 - They too sought to make a great name for themselves.
 - The Jews even claim that this Dura, where Nebuchadnezzar set up his image, is the same site where the tower of Babel was built.
 - Whether is the same site or not, I cannot say...
 - But there certainly seems to be the same spirit...
 - “Let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered.”
2. But this sense of security in the unity of man is really a very shaky kind of security.
- Deep down, the world is quite insecure in their rebellion against God.
 - One of the reasons they crave this kind of unity is because they sense something of their insecurity before the LORD.
 - They join together in a kind of desperation,
 - hoping to gain confidence in their resistance of the God who made them...
- a. You have a theory like Darwinian evolution...
 - Its really quite flimsy,
 - but if it’s the best thing you have to try to deny your Creator...
 - then you can make your position seem secure if you can get a lot of people to support it—if you can even make it public policy!
 - If you can make the official doctrine of the schools!

- Because there are a lot of other people who want to try to avoid God too, you will be able find plenty of supporters...
 - no matter how flimsy the theory itself is!
 - If everybody endorses it, it must be true!
- b. Or do the same thing with an immoral lifestyle...
 - Perhaps you are feeling guilty about the way you are living,
 - but if you can get the public to accept it, you can feel a lot more secure...
 - If it's acceptable for the flyers in the stores to put up posters that were once considered pornographic...
 - it eases your conscience about indulging yourself in a little lust...
 - This is surely one of the main factors that drives the homosexual agenda today.
 - Those living in whatever level of immorality are motivated to have whatever immorality is a little worse approved by everyone,
 - because then they can feel better about their own immorality.
 - Inside, they can say to themselves—
 - at least I'm not like that!

TRANS> And so it is that the city of man joins together in rebellion against God.

- They gather around to celebrate their unity in their rebellion and it makes them feel much more secure.
- And because everyone's participation is important to maintain this security,

B. Babylon pressures **everyone** to participate in their parties.

- The World's parties are designed to bring about conformity—even uniformity!
1. Daniel 3 brings out the two things that the world uses to try to get you to join them...
 - allurements and threats.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar used several **allurements** to draw in the people:
 - 1) There was the fact that all the big shots were there—the important people of his kingdom all came to this festival and participated.
 - Verse 2 says,
 - “And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the

administrators, the governors, the counselors, 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.”

- When all the educated people and the people in high positions participate, it makes it much harder to speak against it.
 - “Surely all these can’t be wrong, can they?”
 - “Who are you to say they are all wrong? All the experts agree.”
- 2) Then there was the allurements of the grandness of the whole thing—with the golden statue that was so immense and so expensive!
 - Somehow, when there is a lot of pomp and expense, it seems to lend credibility to whatever is being done.
 - If Nebuchadnezzar was willing to spend millions or even billions of dollars on this statue, it must be something worthy of my devotion.
 - Crystal Cathedrals must have been built because something very worthwhile is going on there!
 - One of the most well-appointed buildings in Halifax today is the Casino.
 - It lends to it a kind of credibility.
- 3) Then there was the music that was played to charm everyone and put them into a worshipping mode.
 - Music is a very powerful medium to stir the emotions.
 - It has a drug like affect...
 - Pagan religions have always relied on music that appeals to the senses to get worshippers in the mood...
 - to work up a kind of euphoria and artificial sense of well-being to compensate for the worshipper’s insecurity.
 - Such music has a very drawing power.
 - The apostles and the church they established forbade the use of musical instruments in the worship of God for several centuries,
 - and one of the reasons is because they were no longer needed in the New Testament now that Christ had come.
 - The Old Testament people needed to be drawn into their worship which was only shadows,
 - but we are drawn to Christ Himself as He is revealed in the glorious gospel of truth.

TRANS> So you see what **allurements** were employed by Nebuchadnezzar to draw the people in to the worship of his image:

- He used important people, grandeur, and music!
- b. But there was also the **threat**— and a very serious one at that!
- Look at verse 6: “anyone who does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace!”
- 1) The fiery furnace is always there for those that will not go along with the world’s party—
- a) The fiery furnace is there for blasphemers—
- for non-conformists who will not go along with Babylon’s lie and will not bow to the image of man.
 - Every society has its own blasphemy laws—things that nobody is supposed to speak against...
 - A few years ago in Canada, it was about religion—
 - you weren’t supposed to speak against anyone’s religion because the lie was promoted that one was as good as another...
 - Increasingly, this has spread beyond religion to lifestyles—
 - you are not supposed to speak against another person’s lifestyle because the lie is that one lifestyle is as good as another—
 - You are to be all-accepting even if God’s Word clearly condemns a way of living.
- b) The fiery furnace is present in every society...
- though sometimes it is not as visible as it was at Nebuchadnezzar’s party...
 - Sometimes it is there in the form of ridicule and ostracism rather than jail time or financial penalty.
 - You are just given side-ways looks and treated as a social outcast if you violate the accepted blasphemy laws...
 - But the fiery furnace is always present in one way or another to enforce a society’s blasphemy laws.
- 2) Obviously, the furnace is a powerful incentive to go along with the party!
- No one wants to be cast into the fiery furnace...

- No one wants to be ostracised, scorned, laughed at, or ridiculed.
 - So everyone goes along...
 - Notice how verse 7 says, “so...”
 - “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 worshipped the gold image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”
 - They were all drawn in!
2. Christian, every day you have to face the allurements and the threats that try to draw you in to worship the world’s idols!
- a. Can you not identify with the pressure that believers must have experienced at Nebuchadnezzar’s party?
- How easy it would have been for the three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) to justify bowing to this image!
 - They might have said:
 - a) It is our duty to submit to the king—the onus is on him for this...
 - b) Besides, it is just a single act, not a life of idolatry...
 - c) And we aren’t going to do it from the heart—it is purely by coercion that we bow.
 - d) We owe so much to this king anyway—he has educated us and promoted us...
 - e) Besides, we are no longer in our own country, and our place of worship is torn down—God said He would drive us out of the land and that we would worship other gods in those lands...
 - f) Our fathers worshipped idols—they even offered their children to them, and we aren’t going to do that!
 - g) And we must remember, God has given us high positions in Babylon—we were put here to do good for our people and we will lose our positions if we don’t go along with the king in this matter...
 - Surely God wants us to bow!
- b. Christian, don’t think you are exempt from being drawn into the world’s parties in the same ways!
- There is always a great temptation to just go along with the crowd!
 - Most people just go along with public policy without even thinking about it—this is just the way things are done...

1) Do you want some examples in our day of this temptation?

- Okay...
 - Take sanctifying the Lord's Day...
 - How much pressure there is to conform to the world—especially when there is a big hockey tournament and you are on the team.
 - Or take the world's attitude toward parents...
 - Our society has taught for a hundred years that it is normal for you to disrespect your parents when you are a teen—that this is part of normal, healthy development...
 - We parents welcome this teaching because it is hard work to uphold our authority...
 - It eases our conscience and takes away the burden of responsibility to be told that it is okay for our children to be disrespectful.
 - And children gladly accept this notion because they find it hard to honour their parents...
 - Everyone is glad to agree that it is not sin, just a part of healthy, normal development.
 - I could furnish example after example... You are tempted to:
 - embrace the world's attitude that blessing comes from immodesty and immorality... this is constantly promoted by Hollywood.
 - embrace the world's attitude that cursing comes from multiplying children...
 - embrace the world's attitude that divorce is a path to blessing if you are having difficulty in your marriage...
 - embrace the world's attitude that blessing comes from cheating on your taxes if you can get away with it—working under the table.

TRANS> But let me tell you what the most dangerous temptation of all is!

2) The most dangerous temptation of all is to embrace the world's attitude that blessing can come apart from Jesus Christ!

- It is the pride that says,
 - “We can get along fine without the true god.”
 - This is a deadly policy that has been pushed in our society long before sexual immorality or dishonour of parents was accepted.
- The one thing the world agrees about is that blessing can be found

apart from Jesus Christ—

- Even when it is not denied that He may well be one way to blessing...
 - no one wants to say that He is the only way...
 - and even less, that His way is the only way.
 - For a while people were willing to say that He was the only way, but then they distorted what His way is.
- What is so hard about God's way is that you have to give up on man's way,
 - to confess that you are totally undone and fit for nothing but cursing on your own...
 - you have to come to Christ without anything of your own...
 - to sit at His feet,
 - to renew your mind and reform your life according to His will,
 - to give up entirely on any merit of your own and acknowledge that your acceptance with God requires nothing less than the crucifixion of God's Son.
- This is totally unacceptable in the City of Man...
 - The city of man pretends that man can make his own path to glory.
 - There is a constant pull on you who believe to accept this notion—at this point and that point...
 - To revise or at least ignore the more uncomfortable teachings of God's word...
 - This doctrine has permeated the church far more than we realise.
 - Man's depravity is continually toned down and self esteem and human potential are constantly promoted.

TRANS> King Nebuchadnezzar's success at Babylon had reached its climax!

- But now I want you to consider something marvellous that happens when Babylon's party reaches its height...

II. Jesus shows up to spoil Babylon's party!

- Over and over again it happens!

A. Just when everyone in Babylon is feeling all secure and strong in their united independence from God, Jesus shows up to expose their delusions!

1. This is exactly what He did at Nebuchadnezzar's party.

a. He came in His presence with his servants,

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

b. He was the one who came to the three friends to give them grace to stand up against the king and His decree that commanded them to bow to the image.

- They absolutely refused to go along with the king's demand despite the allurements and the threats.

- Even though everyone else bowed down, they would not because they knew that God forbade it in the second commandment.

c. Ordinarily, Jesus comes to spoil the world's parties in this very same way...

- He comes by giving His servants the grace and courage to stand up to the world and to be non-conformists for His sake!

- In His all-wise providence He brings them before kings and governors to testify in His name.

- We read about that in Matthew 10 where we have His words recorded to His disciples:

- "You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." (Matt. 10:18)

- And He promised to these men that when that happened, they would be given His words to speak...

- Matt 10:19-20: "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

2. Jesus has come again and again to break up the world's parties like this...

a. He did it at the tower of Babel when He came and confused their languages.

- He did it in Egypt when He sent Moses to deliver His people.

- He did it in Canaan when He sent Joshua to destroy the idolatrous inhabitants.

- He did it when He came into the world personally and kept spoiling the Pharisees' and Sadducees' parties...

- He did it again when He sent His disciples out into the world to proclaim His truth to the nations...

- b. And He still does it all the time!
 - He does it whenever and wherever He gives His people grace and strength to live for Him and to stand up for His truth.
 - He does it in the workplace with that Christian that keeps reminding everybody about His truth just by being there!
 - And He even does it in families when some cousin or uncle is converted and starts spoiling all the family parties—
 - the family was able to get along fine without God and now there is this jerk there who is always reminding them of the truth.

B. Of course the world hates it when Jesus comes to spoil their party.

1. It is so irritating to them because they know they are living a lie...
 - Deep down, they know that He is right.
 - They know that they must answer to the real God, even though they are desperately trying to forget it.
 - And just when they have almost succeeded in believing the lie...
 - Here they are in Babylon with the security of a wealthy, prosperous, united kingdom,
 - confidently boasting in the city of man...
 - confidently telling themselves that they do not have to answer to their Creator and that they can prosper without Him...
 - these backwards Jewish boys from the defeated kingdom of Judah show up and declare that it's all a lie!
2. Isn't that the way it was when Jesus was here in earth?
 - a. Isn't that why the Scribes and Pharisees were so opposed to Jesus?
 - They had developed a whole false system of religion that promoted the lie of self-righteousness...
 - But when Jesus came round, the light of His truth kept exposing their emptiness.
 - They ground their teeth at Him in rage!
 - They retaliated with such a vengeance that they nailed Him to a cross...
 - In their minds, Barabbas was more worthy to live than Jesus!
 - b. And so it is that Jesus faithful followers have also been hated...

- That is why Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 10:22 that:
 - “You will be hated by all men for My name’s sake.”
- His word tells you again and again not to be surprised if the world hates you.
 - They will hate you if you are living for Him.
 - They will hate you because you remind them of the truth they are trying to forget...
 - In their ongoing efforts to suppress the truth, they will try to suppress you!

3. This same hatred certainly appears in Daniel 3.

- a. It appears in the Chaldeans who seem to be out looking for non-conformists!
 - 1) You get the idea that they were looking for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego!
 - When they come before the King, they seem elated:
 - v. 12 “There are certain Jews whom you have set over the province of Babylon... they do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up!”
 - These men are like the Pharisees that keep looking for some fault with Jesus so they could condemn Him.
 - Here is the opportunity they had been waiting for!
 - These guys didn’t bow down to the image!
 - 2) There are always “Chaldeans” who are busy watching to find fault with Christians.
 - They are looking for non-conformists so they can turn them in to the authorities!
 - If you live a godly life, you will have Chaldeans after you too.

TRANS> But the Chaldeans are not the only ones that have this hatred...

b. Nebuchadnezzar the King has it too!

- 1) He first interviews the three friends to give them a change to repent of their blasphemies.
 - v. 14-15: Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made,*

good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

- He tries to encourage them to “do right” according to government policy.
 - When the world is on its high horse, it often does this to Christians.
 - It accuses them of being narrow minded, foolish, politically unwise, and tries to persuade them to re- think their position.
 - “Surely you don’t believe that there is only one way...”
 - I will never forget when a friend of mine was saved and his old drinking buddies talked to him about how he was ruining his life now that he was no longer getting drunk.
 - And let me tell you—
 - if you give in under this pressure—the world is always ready to accept you back!
 - They are elated if only they can get you to yield!
 - You will receive a very warm welcome from them.
- 2) But after all this effort was made with the three friends and the answer was still “no”—that was when the king really began to rage!
- That was when he began to say, “Crucify, Crucify!”
- a) Verse 19 says,
- “Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury and the expression on his face changed.”
 - He went from the stately bearing of a king to the bearing of a wild animal!
 - How foolish men look when they lose their temper!
 - If they could see their face in the mirror, they would be embarrassed!
- b) In his rage, he becomes irrational and demands that the furnace be heated seven times its normal temperature!
- Ordinarily, all this would do is shorten the three friend’s agony and endanger the lives of those who cast them into the flaming pit...
 - But he could not bear the fact that he could not make these men yield—

- that they had something more important to them than the king's favour!
- He could tolerate them no more!!
 - In they go to the burning fiery furnace!

TRANS> Nebuchadnezzar's party had been spoiled by these non-conformists...

- so now He is going to spoil them!
- But consider thirdly that...

III. Jesus has His own party—and nobody can spoil His party!

A. You see, there are two parties going on in this world at the same time!

1. There is the party that is trying to drown out the truth of God—whether it be by their morality or their drunkenness—the goal is the same—
 - the self-righteous moral man is going to the same party as the drunk immoral man.
 - In the final analysis, the goal of each is to make a life for themselves without Jesus Christ.
 - They can employ religion or greed or wickedness or honour, but their goal is to foster the lie that they can get along with the LORD.
2. Then there is the party that Jesus has.
 - He says, "Come to Me and be blessed,"
 - Mark 8:34-36: "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"
3. Daniel 3 is a vivid account—drawn in bold lines—of the image of God bumping into the image of man.
 - Nebuchadnezzar and his golden image represent the image of man.
 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego represent the image of God as it had been renewed in them through Jesus Christ.
 - We learn here that there is no way that the image of God can party with the image of man, and so they crash into each other...
 - And we see that Nebuchadnezzar *thinks* he can destroy Christ—
 - just as surely as the Jews thought they had destroyed Him when they crucified Him—
 - but He is not so easy to destroy!
 - Jesus is the God of resurrection!

B. Jesus' party continues even in the fiery furnace of the world because He is the God of resurrection!

1. When His servants were in the furnace, He came all the more near to them!

a. Nebuchadnezzar sees clearly that it is so!

- He looks in the furnace and there are Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego walking around with the Son of God.

- v. 24-25 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his 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."

b. Jesus always draws near to His people in their time of need.

- He will never leave you or forsake you...

- "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age!"

1) He comes to you in the furnace in many different ways.

- Sometimes He brings a friend with just the right encouragement from His Word...

- Sometimes He quietly gives grace to sustain you...

- Sometimes He performs great wonders for His servants to deliver them as He did here in Daniel 3....

2) See how weak and helpless the friends were!

a) Look at them, bound, cast into the raging flames, falling into the fire!

- They were utterly unable to save themselves from this fire!

- But that was their testimony all along!

- They were not boasting in their own strength.

- They did not claim to have life in themselves, but only from God.

- Yes, Christian, there is absolutely no way you can stand on your own.

- This picture of desperate weakness and helplessness is a picture of you—

- You can't even live another day for Christ apart from His grace.

- The flames of the world's furnace will turn you to ash in a second...

b) Yet, there they are in the furnace—unharméd!

- In Hebrews 11 we are told of these and those like them who:
 - “who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.”
- But we are also told that:
 - “others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.
- In both cases, Jesus was with them and in both cases, the party continued!
 - Not that these trials were pleasant!
 - But that blessing came through them because of Jesus.
 - No harm came because He was with His people.
 - You can count on it Christian!
 - You may have to go through hard trials, but you will never have to go through them alone!
 - And He will make it evident to your persecutors that He is with you.
 - Remember how the persecutors of Peter and John in acts could tell that they had been with Jesus?
 - It will be the same for you.

2. Nebuchadnezzar had to admire all this!

- a. His party had been spoiled, but he had no power to spoil Jesus’ party.
 - Christian, there is no power that is able to separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ!
- b. Look at what Nebuchadnezzar says about them and about their God in vs 28 and 29!
 - 1) About their God he says:
 - “He sent His Angel and delivered His servants.”

- If only he had known the full significance of these words!
 - God has indeed sent His Angel (or messenger)!
 - the messenger of the covenant Who came to save His people from their sins!
 - Jesus is God's messenger sent from heaven to save us!
- 2) And about the three friends, Nebuchadnezzar points out three things:
- First, he points out that they trusted in the Lord...
 - Nebuchadnezzar rightly saw that we are united to our God by faith—that they believed and trusted Him.
 - Secondly, he points out that they frustrated the king's word.
 - Nebuchadnezzar rightly saw that they were Christ's subjects and so were deaf to any command that contradicts His commands.
 - It is your duty to disobey the king when the king commands you to disobey God.
 - Thirdly, he points out that they yielded their bodies rather than to serve or worship another God.
 - Nebuchadnezzar rightly saw that believers would rather die than to abandon our Lord Jesus.

TRANS> Can these three things be said of you?

- 3) And because Nebuchadnezzar admires all this, he makes a new blasphemy law—
- that no one is to speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.
 - This is marvellous as far as it goes,
 - but sadly, Nebuchadnezzar is not moved to take this God as His own—as the One true God.
- a. He admires Him, but only from a distance...
- He shows no interest in the word of His promise, but only in the display of His power.
 - He admires the resurrection but he does not accept the cross.
- b. Do you understand that what I mean by that?
- It's very important that you do!
 - If you only admire the power of God,

- but you have not learned to delight in the cross,
 - you are still in your sins—
 - you are still fighting against God.
 - The cross is the power of God to salvation.
 - It is only when you embrace Christ crucified and look to Him as the one who was sacrificed to save you from your sins that you can be saved by Him.
 - Nebuchadnezzar knows that the God of the friends has a mighty hand to deliver these boys;
 - But Nebuchadnezzar himself has not submitted to God's deliverance.
- c. Don't you run into that all the time as a Christian?
- People will see you in the furnace—in trials—and they will say,
 - “What wonderful faith you have...”
 - But that is as far as it goes!
 - They stand back and admire, but they do not take a step toward the Saviour.
 - They see that Christians are having a party and they think that is great, but they don't want to join the party!
 - That will do them no good!
 - It will do **you** no good unless you join the party!
3. Nebuchadnezzar's party has been interrupted, but the problem is, he is not ready to entirely forsake it.
- a. It is like a storm came and interrupted his party so that he had to go in for shelter for a little while.
- But that is all—it just stopped him in his tracks for a little while.
 - As soon as the storm clears, he will return and carry on pretty much as he was...
 - possibly still admiring Jesus,
 - but continuing to think that he can be blessed without Him.
- b. But please hear this...
- The world's party must end and it must end completely.
- 1) On the day of judgement, everyone who has pretended that he could live without Christ will be abruptly awakened from his delusions.

- No matter how many people have agreed that they can do this...
- The party will be over and there will be no way to return to it again...
 - And then it will be too late for you to join Christ's party.
 - Then you will be cast into God's fiery furnace and there will be no way to escape.
 - Then you will be dealt with for your blasphemy—not against a petty king who will die just like you,
 - But against the God of heaven and earth!

TRANS> Yes, He has a fiery furnace too!

- In fact, Babylon's fiery furnace is just a cheap imitation of His!
- 2) He calls you to come and join His party now, while there is still time.
- You cannot stand without Him—
 - You are just as helpless as these men were in the furnace...
 - But he is just as strong to deliver you if you but trust in Him.
- c. Be thankful if Jesus has interrupted your party!
- 1) He is the one who brought about the conflict with Nebuchadnezzar in order to demonstrate to everyone that the party of Jesus is the only one worth participating in!
- This was His grace to Nebuchadnezzar that eventually overtakes Him completely.
- 2) Just look at how the LORD worked everything out with such wisdom so as to make His power known at Nebuchadnezzar's party!
- He was the one who sent Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to Babylon in the first place!
 - He is the One who raised them to positions in that kingdom where they would be noticed!
 - He is the one who moved Nebuchadnezzar to call all the important people of his kingdom together for his festival so that they would all be there to witness the glorious testimony and the glorious deliverance of the three friends.
 - He is the One who gave the three friends grace to stand up to Nebuchadnezzar and refuse to bow to his image.
 - He is the One who brought it about the Nebuchadnezzar should order the furnace to be heated seven times so that the valiant men who took them up to cast them in would perish, making the deliverance of the

three friends all the more glorious and conspicuous.

- He is the One who showed Himself so plainly to be with them in the fire.
- He is the One who brought them out unharmed, with out even the smell of the smoke clinging to them and without a hair singed.

3) Learn from this!

- a) Learn from this if you are a believer that you ought not to be discouraged by the furnace, even when it is heated seven times over!
 - Jesus does this to demonstrate clearly to everyone your precious relationship with Him and His glorious grace to sustain you...
- b) And learn from this if you are not a believer that He does this to spoil your party!
 - Don't go on thinking you can live without Him! You can't!
 - He spoils your party so that you can stop and see how much greater His party is...
 - It is His grace to you to show you that now!
 - Come and join His party and live forever!
 - His party never ends.
 - He will bring all who trust in Him into His house to live in the sweet communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever and ever!
 - What communion can you have in Babylon to compare with that?