

Part 7 — “Idolatry & the People of God” — 10 July 2022

Introduction

The power of God had been demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar through the revelation and interpretation of his dream. The king had paid homage to Daniel and therefore to his God, recognizing Him as “God of gods” and “Lord of kings.” In spite of this, the king still had much to learn about the power and authority of the God of Heaven.

Main Point: In a world marked by idolatry, we can only be guarded from its effects and live as God’s faithful witnesses as we _____ ourselves to His Word.

Nebuchadnezzar’s Image of Gold—Daniel 3:1-12

The Image & the King’s Command (3:1-7)

Observations

1. Some time after the events of Ch. 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a large statue of gold erected outside of the city.

“an image of gold”
“the plain of Dura”

2. The building of the statue was clearly done in _____ to what the king saw in his dream.

⇒ Although he had been a passive observer in his dream as God ‘set up’ (*qûm*) a kingdom which would last forever, Nebuchadnezzar determined himself to ‘set up’ (*qûm*) a representation of his own kingdom.

3. The king called together the _____ of his kingdom for the dedication of the statue and commanded that they publicly pay homage to him and his kingdom by bowing down to it.

⇒ Just as the king had ‘paid homage’ (*seg-eeed*) to Daniel, the king expected his officials to ‘worship’ (*seg-eeed*) the image at the appointed time indicated by the playing of music.

4. Failure to obey the command of the king would result in immediate _____.
“fiery furnace”

Key Point: Rather than recognizing that he was subservient to the God of Heaven, Nebuchadnezzar was setting himself up as a rival to Him who could manipulate His _____ and resist His _____.

“...God’s effective rule as King of all the nations (the substance of the dream in ch. 2) is resisted by [the king], who seeks to ensure the loyalty of his subjects and to bolster the strength of his kingdom by commanding that they prostrate themselves before the golden image that symbolizes his glorious empire...” — Gregory Goswell, “The Ethics of the Book of Daniel”

Resistance to the King’s Command (3:8-12)

Observations

1. Probably due to _____, some court officials came before the king and accused the Jews of disobedience.
“maliciously accused”

2. Their accusations were intended to make the king take the disobedience of these ‘certain Jews’ _____.

⇒ They pointed out that was the king who had issued the decree (3:10) and who had appointed these Jews to their positions of power (3:12).

⇒ They then made three specific accusations against the three men:

“These men...pay no attention to you”

“they do not serve your gods”

“[they do not] worship the golden image you have set up”

God had warned His people against the practice of idolatry:

Exod. 20:4-5—⁴ *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”* ⁵ *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God*

Key Point: The refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey God rather than the king was a tangible demonstration that the God of Heaven was a greater _____ than Nebuchadnezzar.

“The actions of the three young men...threaten [the king] himself, for by not serving the deities that sanction his rule, give him prosperity, and protect his very life, they denigrate the king’s royal standing. The author shows that, for Nebuchadnezzar, their refusal is not only a religious act; it is a thoroughly political one—namely disloyalty to the state.” —J.Paul Tanner, *Daniel*

Implications for the Future (Eschatology)

- The command of Nebuchadnezzar anticipates the false worship of the end-time antagonist (antichrist).

A leader will arise who will combine both the _____ and the _____ (Rev. 13:7-8)

A false prophet will arise and lead the people of the earth into _____ through the worship of the antagonist (Rev. 13:14-15)

“The image of the Beast may not be a literal idol. It may be that it refers to some great popular movement; but it seems to be intimately connected with that of which our Lord warned His disciples. At any rate it speaks of a time when men will be called upon to acknowledge the power and the authority of that which is Satanic instead of Divine, and when practically all the world will be brought to own the Antichrist as Messiah.”
—H.A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel*

Living Faithfully in “Babylon”

- In a fallen world, idolatry is our _____ form of worship.

Gen. 3:22—*Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil...”*

Rom. 1:23-24—²⁴ *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ²⁵ *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!*

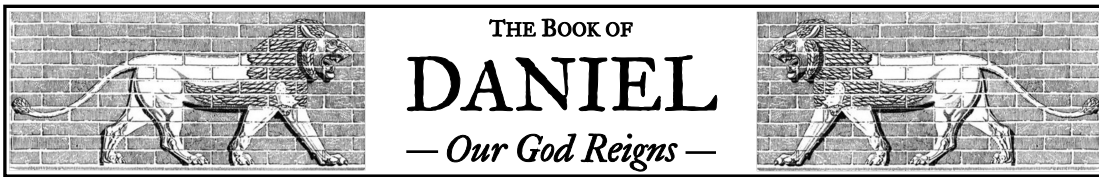
“Idolatry dethrones God and enthrones creation. Idolatry is the attempt to limit, reduce, and control God by refusing His authority, constraining or manipulating His power to act, having Him available to serve our interests. At the same time, paradoxically, idolatry exalts things within the created order (whether natural objects in the heavens or on earth, or created spirits, or the products of our own hands or imaginations). Creation is credited with the potency that belongs only to God; it is sacralized, worshiped and treated as that from which ultimate meaning can be derived. A great reversal happens: God, who should be worshiped, becomes an object to be used; creation, which is for our use and blessing, becomes the object of worship.”
—Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God*

(1) *We are prone to _____ God’s will.*

(2) *We are prone to _____ God’s Word for our own purposes.*

- In a fallen world, we have opportunities to resist idolatry and live as God’s _____.

1 Pet. 4:3-5—³ *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.* ⁴ *With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;* ⁵ *but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*



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Key Point: Rather than recognizing that he was subservient to the God of Heaven, Nebuchadnezzar was setting himself up as a rival to Him who could manipulate His **Word** and resist His **Will**.

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