

DANIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Daniel chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God. This is one of those great Bible stories because it shows to us what faith in action looks like! We are going to see Daniel's three friends; Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to obey the King by dishonoring their God!

Let's face it, trials that come into our life will test our faith or tempt us to sin. The test of our faith is what God is doing, the temptation to sin is what the Devil does. And if your faith is real then it will be reflected in your actions. That is not to say that we don't fail at times because we do. But faith should be seen in our lives!

James tells us, "**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**" James 1:2-3. Notice that James is not saying "*if*" you fall into various trials but "**when**" you fall into various trials! We should expect them to come. And not only expect them but as we are going through them we do so with *JOY*, the joy of the Lord knowing that He is working and we must trust in Him and walk by faith!

And it is no accident with God. Some may get that idea because James speaks of falling into various trials, that we have just kind of stumbled into them by accident. That is not the case. You see, the word is better translated "*encounter*" or "*come across*." So the verse should read, "**My brethren, count it all joy when you encounter (or come across) various trials.**"

Now don't become discouraged by this. God uses a variety of trials, He mixes them up, the various experiences of life to produce or complete something beautiful for His glory, us! You see, the Eastern goldsmith would keep that precious metal, like gold, in the fiery furnace until he could see his own reflection in it, after all the impurities were raised to the surface and removed.

In I Peter 1:6-9 Peter reminds us, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

Again we see this rejoicing as we go through these trials knowing that God is testing us, helping our faith to grow as we exercise it, as we put into practice that which we have learned. And in the end we see the completeness of our faith as we go to be with Him!

Remember what I said about the gold refined in the fire so the impurities can be removed. That is what God does with us. He allows the fires of tribulations to purge us of the impurities in our life so they can be removed. Thus, as God looks at us He will see His own reflection, but that is a life-long process as I have said. So as we go through all these trials we give praise and honor and glory to God, and we do so with joy.

Keep in mind that true faith, like pure gold, will endure no matter how hot the fire is turned up as we will soon see in the lives of these three Jewish men; Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah!

With that said, let's begin reading in Daniel chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

DANIEL 3

VERSE 1

1. As we read this we might not think this is such a big deal, it is just a statue! But it is a big deal. Keep in mind that these events took place after the events of chapter 2, some say a few years all the way to maybe 20 years or so. I tend to think it was shortly after the events of Daniel chapter 2.

Back in Daniel chapter 2 we saw the King have a dream of this awesome multi-metallic image which God interpreted for him through the prophet Daniel. The head of this image was of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

And what this image represented was the various Gentile World Empires beginning with the Babylonian, which was succeeded by the Medo-Persian, which was succeeded by the Grecian, which was succeeded by the Roman.

And we saw that the last Gentile World Empire will be part of the old Roman Empire. Then, during the time of this last Gentile World Empire Jesus Christ will return to set up His Kingdom and He will utterly crush and pulverize these Gentile Kingdoms, leaving no sign of them or their existence.

In light of that, as you read what the King sets up here in Daniel chapter 3 it is in defiance of what God had told him already. This image that King Nebuchadnezzar set up was some 90 feet tall, (about the size of a present day eight story building), and 9 feet wide. The difference between this image which he made and the image of the dream that God had given to him is very obvious. This image which the King made was entirely of gold, probably gold plated. And what he is saying was that his Kingdom, the Babylonian Kingdom would never end!

But if you remember back in chapter 2, after Daniel revealed the dream and its interpretation to the King that Daniel said, “**... The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.**” Daniel 2:45. There are no maybe’s with God, what God has spoken will come to pass and as we read through the book of Daniel and look at history we see the Babylonian Empire destroyed and the succeeding Empires come to power just as God had said!

2. So here is this huge image, 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide, gold plated and it was placed in the plain of Dura or the desert for all to see! Can you imagine what this looked like when the sun hit it! It must have glowed and you could probably see it for miles around!

Interestingly enough, archaeologist Julies Oppert found an exact square of about forty-five feet at the base and some 20 feet high located some six miles southeast of Babylon that may have been the base for this image. This area is called Tolul Dura or Mounds of Dura.

3. Now what is the King going to do with this image? We don’t have to guess because we are told but think about it. You are the King, you are a dictator and if people didn’t like what you did you put them to death. A good incentive program to follow the King’s decrees and with all that power it went right to his head as we will see.

VERSES 2-7

1. Not only was King Nebuchadnezzar rebelling against what God had told him but he was also testing the allegiance of his leaders and his people. That is why I think this was early on in his reign as oppose to some 20 years or so into his reign as some feel.

2. And now this image is completed and it was time to have the dedication ceremony. Now you are the King and you call those who are under you, the other leaders to show how powerful you really are. So the king calls 8 classes of officials together for this, besides many others. They are as follows:

A. SATRAPS - CHIEF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE KING

B. ADMINISTRATORS - MILITARY COMMANDERS

C. GOVERNORS - CIVIL COMMANDERS

D. COUNSELORS - COUNSELORS TO THOSE IN GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY

E. TREASURERS - ADMINISTERED THE FUNDS OF THE KINGDOM

F. JUDGES - ADMINISTRATORS OF THE LAW

G. MAGISTRATES - PASSED JUDGMENT IN KEEPING THE LAW

H. OFFICIALS - ALL THE OTHER GOVERNMENTAL PEOPLE

3. Now the King's command is that when they hear the music begin to play they are to fall to their knees and worship this statue, which probably looked like King Nebuchadnezzar. What if someone didn't want to worship this image? Well the King had this little incentive program for all the people, even his leaders.

We are told what will happen to them, “**... whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.**” Daniel 3:6. No trial, no “If the glove does not fit you must acquit!” If you refused to worship this image you were put to death “**immediately**”!

VERSES 8-12

1. Times have not changed much over the years as we see here. These Chaldeans were jealous of Daniel and his friends. Remember that after Daniel had revealed and interpreted the King's dream in Daniel chapter 2 that he was placed “**... over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.**” Daniel 2:48. Not only that, but we also see Daniel's 3 friends placed “**... over the affairs of the province of Babylon. . .**” Daniel 2:49.

These Jewish captives were placed in a position of authority over these wise men of Babylon. And as this animosity grew against these Jewish men the Chaldeans saw one way to get back at them. Their plan was to get them to either compromise their faith as they worship the image or to be burned in the fiery furnace for refusing to worship this image. Either way these Chaldeans saw victory for themselves.

2. Now this is something that I want you to think about. These Jewish men were not obnoxious about this issue, they were not making a big deal about it, they just refused to worship this image because it would dishonor God, it would be wrong to do. How did they know this was wrong? Because they knew the Word of God!

If you remember in Exodus chapter 20 as God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments, the first four dealt with man's relationship with God. The other six dealt with man's relationship with man. Thus, you could never have a right relationship with man without first having a right relationship with God. You see, without Christ being our Lord and Savior our relationship with man is askew!

The thing I want you to see is what the Lord said in Exodus chapter 20 that was followed by these young men. In Exodus chapter 20 beginning in verse 2 we read, **"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. 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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."** Exodus 20:2-6.

They lived what they believed and others saw that. Their faith shined brightly and, in this case others were going to try to destroy them for it. They did not try to hide their faith but they just lived it!

And folk's, we can't hide our faith either. We are not to be obnoxious or rude or disrespectful towards others but we are to shine for Him and as we do people will take notice. It is as Spurgeon wrote, "You will not be able to go through life without being discovered: a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent [quiet], and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the wartime, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set!"

If we truly believe what God's Word tells us, if we truly believe what we say we believe, then we will live it, our faith will be real as we see here with these three Jewish men as their faith is going to be tested!

VERSES 13-15

1. Now as we read this story there is a key person missing and that is Daniel. Why is Daniel not mentioned? First of all we need to be clear on this point. Daniel did not bow down to this golden image. Then where was he? Most likely, because of his position within that Kingdom, he was out on government business. That is what most likely took place.

2. To say that King Nebuchadnezzar was upset is to put it mildly. It says that he was "**in rage and fury.**" He was about to explode and yet, this King gives these men a second chance. He gives them another opportunity to comply with the command and bow down and worship this golden image. That tells me two things. The first, it is possible that the King liked these men. The second point is certain, God's hand of protection was upon these men and nothing was going to happen to them without God allowing it and we will see that in a minute!

3. Remember what the King said back in Daniel 2:47, “**... ‘Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.’**” Now that has changed and the King challenges the God of these men to save them if they do not bow down to this golden image. He is basically challenging any god to circumvent his authority! Talk about pride and we know that it is pride that brings us down and we will see that in the next chapter for this King!

4. And please understand that this is not an empty threat to try and scare these men. The King was more than ready to bring this about if they refused his orders. So with this threat before them will these men stand up for what they believe or will they crumble to the pressure that has been placed upon them and compromise their faith?

I like the way that Spurgeon looked at this situation and situations we face as he wrote, “Do not judge the situation by the king’s threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut [a type of trombone from the Renaissance] fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved.” That is the perspective and stance we need to take!

But too often we let the fear of man drive us instead of the fear of God guide us. When Henry Ironside was a young man his mother would talk to him about coming to the Lord. But he would tell her, “Mother, I know I need to be saved and I would like to be saved, but I’m afraid if I get saved the boys will laugh at me.” And his mother would say to him, ‘Harry, just remember one thing. Your friends can laugh you into hell, but they can never laugh you out of it.’ A powerful point she made!

5. One more point here before we move on and see what these men did, how they responded to the King. And this is something we need to think about and learn from. Think about this,

Nebuchadnezzar conquered countries, looted riches, captured people, but he allowed people to worship their own gods. He was considered very liberal and generous in that regard. He let people worship their gods - but he also wanted them to worship his.

That's always the way of the enemy. "You can go to church," he says. "But on Friday night, you have to watch the movie, check out the bar scene, bow down to me. Then, on Sunday, you can go to church again." The enemy will give you the freedom to worship God, hoping you'll feel okay about bowing down to his idols. It's a trade. That's always his way.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary, Old Testament Volume 2, p. 708

VERSES 16-18

1. These men did not need to give the King a long, drawn out defense for themselves. Their response was that the God they serve can deliver them, if it is His will, but no matter what happens they will not compromise their beliefs.

That is faith displayed in action! They saw the sovereignty of God in their lives. H. L. Leupold put it this way. He said, "The quiet, modest, yet withal very positive attitude of faith that these three men display is one of the noblest examples in the Scriptures of faith fully resigned to the will of God. These men ask for no miracle, they expect none. Theirs is a faith that says: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'" (Job 13:15).

The only expectation that they had was that God was sovereign and He would do as He pleases and no matter what comes their way, they will obey Him! What happens many times is that we place attachments or this has to happen and then I will serve you or love you or this or that!

Remember when Jacob was fleeing for his life from his brother Esau. And on the run he came to Bethel and there he rested. And there at Bethel the Lord spoke to him and promised to watch over him. And this is what transpired next, **“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.’”** Genesis 28:20-21.

Did you see that? Jacob is saying that he will serve the Lord if the Lord does these things for him! Now don’t be so shocked because we do the same thing many times. “Lord, heal my marriage and I will serve You!” “Lord, don’t let me get fired and I will love You!” “Lord, bring my children back to You and You will be my God!”

And, of course, the list can go on and on! You don’t make deals with God, you trust in Him no matter what happens in your life! That is what we see here with these men. That no matter what happens they are not going to compromise their faith, their love for God is not going to change!

2. We also need to look at this idea of compromise because it seems to be growing as the Lord’s return is getting closer. Let me share this true story with you and you will see the danger of compromise. We are told,

Because of its unusual growth habits, the tropical Banyan tree is known as a “strangler fig.” These large trees usually start life when their seed is deposited by a bird high in the foliage of another tree. The Banyan’s roots descend over the trunk of the host tree seeking out the soil below. Once they have rooted themselves, the roots of the strangler fig rapidly thicken and lengthen. Where the fig roots cross each other they fuse, thus creating a lattice around the host tree’s trunk. Gradually they starve the host tree and prevent it from growing by robbing all its light, water, and nutrients. Eventually the Banyan tree chokes the host until it dies and rots away, leaving the strangler fig standing in its place.

In a similar manner, as the seeds of creeping compromise are tolerated in God’s remnant church, spiritual life and fruit are being sapped away.

- <http://www.amazingfacts.org/media-library/book/e/19/t/compromise-conformity-and-courage.aspx>

What about you? What have you compromised in your walk with the Lord? Maybe it is not one big thing but many little things. Understand this; a compromise is still a compromise! Stand strong in the faith, don’t compromise, trust in Him and the promises He has given to you in His Word! Make no excuses; God is able to deliver you if it is His will. Trust in Him and then rest in Him!

Remember what Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

Conforming is easy, this world places you in their mold and you end up looking just like them, acting just like them, talking just like them. But transformation is a work of God that will also affect your life as you reflect the nature of God!

VERSES 19-23

1. You know how people's faces turn red the angrier that they get! I think King Nebuchadnezzar's face was about as red as it could be! He probably had smoke coming out of his ears because these three men refused to do as he commanded, they refused to worship this golden image!

And imagine what these three men were witnessing! I am sure the words that the King said can't be repeated here, and the yelling. I bet even his own men were afraid of what he was going to do!

He warned that anyone who refused to bow before this golden image and worship it would be thrown into the fiery furnace and that is what he would do with these men. Only this time he would have the furnace heated up seven times more than normal. And keep in mind that the ancients were very skilled in regulating the temperatures of these blast furnaces for smelting various metals and to bake bricks.

Talk about overkill. Think about it. If you are going to burn in the fire does it matter how hot it is, you are going to be burned up. Keep in mind that this was a kiln with an opening at the top and that is where materials would be dumped in. Then at the bottom was an opening for withdrawing the burned substances.

2. Obviously this King was out of control at this point, his emotions were driving what he was doing and that is never a good thing. And he orders these three Hebrew men to be cast into this fiery furnace with their clothes on, even their turbans or hats they were still wearing. And they were also bound so they could not move and the Kings own “**mighty men**” were to throw them in.

To do that they would have to climb up ladders and then, like I said there was this opening at the top and they would be thrown in! Get the picture of what is happening here. This furnace is so hot that as these “**mighty men**” threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego into this fiery furnace the “**mighty men**” were instantly burned up! Things did not look good for these three Hebrew men. Let’s read on and see what happened, if God delivered them or they went to be with the Lord!

VERSES 24-27

1. What an amazing story of God’s protection in the midst of this fiery trial! Now the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures makes this interesting point in Daniel 3:24. It says that the King heard singing coming from this fiery furnace and that caught his attention.

I get the picture here that these men were thrown into the fiery furnace and the King turned to leave because no one could escape that heat, not even the men who threw them into the fire escaped! He truly believed that they would be immediately consumed by the fire and they should have been.

So as he begins to walk away he hears singing coming from this fiery furnace and it stops him dead in his tracks. And I am sure he got as close as he could to that furnace without being burned up and as he looked inside he saw four men walking around, not even bound or burned!

That should sound familiar because in the New Testament we read about Paul and Silas bound in a Philippian jail and in Acts 16:25-31 we are told, **“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”**

What’s my point? My point is this. When you are in a trial, when things are heating up in your life, are you singing praises to the Lord or are you singing the blues? You are going to do one or the other! The thing we must remember is that there is family, friends, neighbors, co-workers watching you as you go through these trials and if you are singing the blues you are not going to draw them to Jesus. In fact, they will not want what you have! But if you sing praises unto God even though you are going through this fiery trial, that may draw them to Jesus!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 3:2-3, **“You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”** I think that sometimes we forget that the only Bible some people will read is our lives – may they see Jesus in our lives!

The problem is that sometimes I think we forget that God is always with us. This is a great illustration showing us that even in the fieriest trials we find ourselves in, God is there right beside us. What a comfort that should be for us if we would just hold onto that truth. As flames were all around these young men there is Jesus with them. I love that!

And as you read this we see that this pagan King saw the Lord in the midst of this fire with these men! Now keep in mind that Nebuchadnezzar did not know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob yet. The Babylonians did believe that their gods had sons and thus, this fourth person in the fire was the Son of God or deity! What a witness that was to him and we will see in a minute if he comes to know the true or living God yet.

2. One more point I want to deal with here and it is amazing. As the King calls for them to come out of this fire they just walk out. The ropes that bound them were burned away. Their clothes were not harmed nor were they. In fact, they did not even smell like smoke. Try sitting around a campfire and see what you will smell like, ***SMOKE!*** There is no way to stop that unless the Lord does and He did that here!

It is as Jesus said in John 8:36, “**Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**” The chains of sin have been broken and we are set free in Christ!

3. Now we are going to read the King’s response to what has taken place. Listen carefully to what he is saying.

VERSES 28-30

1. Notice the response of this King. He recognized that this was a miracle. He knew there was no other god like the God these men served. He had all this information but it never changed his life. How do I know that? Because as we get into Daniel chapter 4 we see that his god was himself and he needed to be broken of that before he could be saved!

2. Because these men honored God, God honored them by promoting them in Babylon. That is an important lesson for us to understand. Stand strong in the faith, don't compromise and God will lift you up! And make no mistake about it, His plans and His purposes will come to pass!

3. One last point before we move into chapter 4 this evening and it has to do with the prophetic significance of this chapter or this prophetic picture that is being painted for us here. During the coming Tribulation Period there will arise a Gentile ruler (Daniel 7:8) that will demand that he himself should be worshiped and not the living God (II Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:8). During this time anyone who refuses to worship him will be killed (Revelation 13:15). And as this ruler gains political and religious power, he will oppress Israel (Revelation 13:7).

King Nebuchadnezzar represents the Gentile ruler. The three Jewish men represent the nation of Israel who will go through the fiery tribulation but will be protected by God (Revelation 12:14).

But where is Daniel in all of this? Like I have said, Daniel, for some reason was not around for he surely would not have worshiped the image. In saying that, Daniel is a type of the Church who is taken up before the Tribulation Period begins. The Church will not go through this trial. Interesting coincidence or is the Holy Spirit trying to show us something?

DANIEL 4

VERSES 1-3

1. We might call this section, “*The Conversion of the King*” because I believe this chapter is the testimony of this King coming to the Lord. It will give to us where he was at and where he is presently and you can see the change in his life, not just empty words but from the heart he is now speaking!

Nebuchadnezzar opens up with a proclamation of his faith in “the Most High God” and that His Kingdom, not Nebuchadnezzar’s is an everlasting Kingdom! From here he will share his testimony as I have said and how God broke him of his pride and brought him to the faith!

You see, in previous chapters the King had a head knowledge of “the Most High God” But we are going to see that this pagan King come to know “the Most High God” in his heart. And this proclamation here is to let others know who rules! Yes I believe the King is saved and you will see why as we go through this portion of Scripture.

VERSES 4-9

1. We saw back in Daniel chapter 2 that the King had a dream and it troubled him and once again we see this happening here in Daniel chapter 4. Things were going well in *HIS KINGDOM*, nothing to worry about. And as we will see it was a powerful Kingdom, it was a wealthy Kingdom!

And it seems that the King had just completed a victorious battle against Egypt which is supported by a fragmentary tablet that was found which reads, “In the 37th year Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon marched against Egypt to deliver a battle.” So after this battle, this world ruler felt free from fear. He was unconquerable! He was secure! He was also full of pride!

But now he has this dream and he is troubled by it and the reason he was troubled is he knew it was about him but he was not sure what it meant, what would happen to him. So he once again calls together the wise men of Babylon to interpret the dream. The difference this time is the wise men were told the dream so all they had to do was go to their book of dreams and give the interpretation! But they still couldn't!

After he exhausted all his resources we see Daniel enter the scene, and keep in mind that Daniel was the chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. And as Daniel enters he is recognized as the one that has the Spirit of God in him.

May that be what people see in us! And it is interesting that the King gives both his Hebrew name and his Babylonian name, Daniel and Belteshazzar respectively. Why would the King do this? First, his Babylonian name was the name he was known by throughout the land. It was his official name. His Hebrew name spoke of the power behind the interpreter of dreams, the Holy God!

2. As we read on we will see the King tell Daniel his dream and then wait for Daniel to give to him the interpretation.

VERSES 10-18

1. The King saw this great tree that prospered and many sought protection from under its branches. But then this watcher comes and he cuts down this tree and just left the stump of the tree in the ground. And this picture changes or this man changes into an animal for several seasons or years. The bottom line for this happening is so that “**. . . the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.**” Daniel 4:17.

As I have said, the King knew the dream somehow was related to him but he didn't know what it meant! Was this good news or bad news? I think what troubled the King so much was he knew it wasn't good news. You see, the end result of the dream was that God was going to reveal Himself and His authority to the King. Something this autocratic ruler wanted nothing to do with, like many people today!

2. And now Daniel will give the interpretation for this dream to the King.

VERSES 19-26

1. What would you do in a situation like this where the interpretation of the dream is speaking about the leader or president being taken out of the picture? Daniel was troubled because it meant bad news for this King who was his friend. In fact he wished the dream was meant for the King's enemies, but it was not. May we have that kind of love for the unsaved, even the political leaders in our country that put down the true and living God by their words and deeds. May we pray for them that “**. . . the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.**” Daniel 4:17.

Keil says of this, “As Daniel once understood the interpretation of the dream, he was for a moment astonished that he could not speak for terror at the thought which moved his soul. This amazement seized him because he wished well to the king and yet he must now announce to him a weighty judgment from God.”

2. Daniel tells the King that this is about him and his Kingdom and he starts out with the good news. How his Kingdom grew and prospered. And then came the bad news and it was bad for the King!

Daniel speaks of this angel or watchman coming down and he chops down this tree, the King, only leaving the stump and its roots remaining. The idea here is that the King is going to be removed from his Kingdom for a time. He will not be destroyed because the root system remains. The band of iron and bronze speaks of a protective fence in which the King would dwell safely within.

Why would the King need this kind of protection? Because he was going to encounter a mental illness that was going to last anywhere from 1¾ years to 7 years, depending on how you take “seven times” to mean, seasons or years. I tend to lean more towards this being years. And yet during this time he would be cared for and I believe that it is Daniel that not only cared for the King but also watched over the Kingdom for him until the King and his sanity returned.

What an important lesson for us to learn. It doesn't matter if a person is a tyrant dictator with absolutely no morals; we are to reach out in love to them, pointing them to Jesus as Daniel did with this King. We are to love the unloving, as the Lord did with us. And, as Daniel, you will see the awesome transforming power of God in that person's life if they are willing to receive it. You love the person and let God deal with the heart as Daniel did!

3. Now some people laugh at this idea of a person thinking he is an animal but there is a condition where that occurs. This demented state is known as Zoanthropy and is manifested by a person who thinks of himself as an animal and acts like one and more specifically in Nebuchadnezzar's case, boanthropy, the delusion that one is an ox. That may seem a bit bizarre, and I guess it is. But there are actual reported cases of this condition.

Raymond Harrison speaks of a personal experience which was very similar to what the King had. Raymond Harrison observed this in a British mental institution back in 1946. So this is not farfetched as some might think.

4. Now there is an upside to this, the King's sanity will return if he meets this one condition. This will take place when the King has "**come to know that Heaven rules.**" You see, when he acknowledges God's sovereign rule he will be restored. For the King it will take him seven years or seasons before he responds to the rule of God. But even before the King acquires this mental illness we see Daniel give him some wise counsel in verse 27.

VERSE 27

1. I like the way that Daniel ends this, with application. In other words, he is telling the King to repent, it might not be too late and this judgment from God will be stopped! Even though it is good counsel that Daniel gave, the King really doesn't follow through with what Daniel had told him as we will see.

Many today do the same thing. They hear the truth of God and yet they reject it because it does not fit their own prideful plan of action. It doesn't make them right, but just shows how pride has caused them to be foolish in their decision making and there are consequences to their actions be they a King or a peasant!

VERSES 28-33

1. I want you to notice how patient the Lord is here. He gives this King one year or twelve months to repent of his pride, of his sin and he doesn't, maybe even forgetting about this dream he had and the judgment that was to come if he did not change!

And here we see God's judgment fall upon the King when he was boasting of **HIS** mighty kingdom that **HE** has built! But did the King have a reason to boast? Was his Kingdom that powerful and secure? From a human perspective he did have the right to boast about his mighty Kingdom.

The city of Babylon extended for some 60 miles around, 15 miles on each side. The walls of the city were some 350 feet in the air and some 80 feet thick, extending some 35 feet below the ground so that their enemies could not tunnel in. On this wall they would have chariot races anywhere from 6 to 8 abreast.

There were some 250 towers on top of the wall that extended another 100 feet in the air. They had another inner wall with a moat between the two walls. The Euphrates River almost divided the city into two equal parts with gates at the entrance and exit of the river, and the river supplied the city with a fresh water supply. They had enough food within the city to last them 20 years without ever opening the gates of the city. Now you know why he was so secure as he walked upon the walls of the city.

Not only that, there was also the hanging gardens of Babylon, which were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The gardens were built for the King's Median wife. There were several tiers of arches one over the other, each bearing a solo platform, 400 square feet of terraces and the top was covered with flowers, shrubs, trees and a garden roof, all watered from a reservoir at the top to which the water was raised from the river by hydraulic pumps. And at the top was also a temple to the god Bel. Again, a very impressive sight to behold and he felt secure, although he was warned not to be.

2. That is how man looks at things and it is not a reality. You see, from God's eyes what he had given to him by God. In Jeremiah chapter 27 we read beginning in verse 6, **“And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them. And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,’ says the LORD, ‘with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.’”**

Jeremiah 27:6-8. That is the real power behind the King's mighty Kingdom - *GOD!*

3. Now notice how quickly this judgment came upon the King as his sin of pride continued. It was in that very hour as the King was speaking, as he was boasting of all he had done that judgment fell and he was made to dwell like an animal until he acknowledges the true God!

VERSES 34-37

1. What is the first thing this King does? The first thing that this King does is he looks up to heaven. We too must look up to God and call upon Him if we are to be saved. No one can do that for us. When we do we will be restored to fellowship with Him. Our eyes will be open to the truths of God and we will have the wisdom of God imparted to us.

The next thing we see this King do is praise and worship the true and living God or “**the Most High.**” The King blesses God. When you are filled with the love of Christ in your heart there is a natural outflow of praise and worship unto God for what He has done in your life. That is what happened to the King when he encountered God and his sanity returned to Him as well as his Kingdom!

2. I think we will see this pagan King once again because I believe he came to saving faith and this is his testimony and it is a powerful one! He came to know that “**God rules!**” Now some may not agree with what I have said regarding the salvation of this pagan King but I do find this interesting and it shows me he was saved.

You see, the verbs “**praise**”, “**extol**” and “**honor**” in verse 37 speak of a continuing action in the King’s life. It was not like the previous chapters where in the excitement of the miracle the King made an empty profession of faith. I think the King is saved!

Now in saying that and knowing how wicked and immoral this King was, I hope that you see that no heart is too hard, that no person is beyond hope but all have a choice to make. You have the choice to turn to the living God and receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life or to reject Him and His call upon your life and be eternally separated from Him in the Lake of Fire!

3. Next week we will see a heart filled with pride in the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, which will only cause Belshazzar to fall from his position and it will also cause the Kingdom to come crashing down because he refused to repent and turn to the ***GOD WHO RULES!***