

The Book of Daniel Bible Study Lesson 8

Daniel 3:1-7 Notes

A Heart for Self or a Heart for God

Introduction:

(MacArthur) There are a lot of people in the world who can't decide what to do with God. That is precisely the issue of Daniel 3. This chapter separates those who didn't put God in His rightful place from three who did. It sets for us a constant theme throughout Scripture and history of the conflict between those who give God due respect and those who don't.

Man is incurably religious. That's very obvious as you go around the world: you find that all races and ethnic groups have some substance of religion. Man inevitably bows at some shrine. It is either the worship of the true God or some false substitute, but man is incurably religious.

Romans 1:21 says that when men "*knew God, they glorified Him not as God . . .*" Turning his back on the true God, man began to worship the creature more than the Creator. He made gods out of wood and stone and he began to worship man, birds, beasts, and creeping things. In other words, Roman 1 is telling us that when man turns his back on the true God, he will not go into a religious vacuum, he will create other gods out of snakes, birds, beasts, and men. He will worship the creature if he does not worship the Creator.

Whenever man invents his own god, he makes him into the kind of god he wants him to be. Then, in an interesting cycle, man usually becomes like his god. The Old Testament tells us much about man's religious nature and how he characteristically creates a god like himself and then becomes more and more like that god. By doing this, he accommodates his sinfulness, because the difficulty in worshipping the true God is that you have to face the reality of your inadequacy and sinfulness. So if you reject the true God, you simply invent a god who is a lot like you and therefore, a lot easier to live with.

The Bible says that "*God created man in His own image*" (Gen. 1:27), but man creates gods in his own image, the ultimate form of rebellion. For this reason, there is a constant conflict in the world between the worship of the true God and the worship of false gods; gods made out of the imagination of men whose worship reflects their own sinfulness.

Affection of the Heart:

(Krohn) In response to the mercy of God in chapter two, king Nebuchadnezzar was awed, but not converted. The king of Babylon's self-

importance remained unchanged by the revelation he was given by the King of Kings. As a result, the conflict between kingdoms (God vs. self) continued into the third chapter of Daniel.

The focus of the conflict in Daniel 3 was on the image that king Nebuchadnezzar “sets up”, although man was made in the image of God, sin entered the world and, with it, conflict (Gen. 1:26-27; 3). Among kingdoms and within our own hearts, we live in constant conflict. Whom we will serve, whom we will please, and to whom will we look to for acceptance and hope? A day is coming when the everlasting Kingdom of God will swallow up all the kingdoms of man. Until that day, God has made a way for us to stand firm and be recreated in His image. He sent His son to live among kingdoms of man, bringing to them the Kingdom of God. Through His life and message, Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself to rescue us from enslavement to the kingdoms of this world---including our own. Through the Cross and resurrection, Jesus not only defeated the kingdoms of this world, but sent His Spirit so we can “*put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*” (Col. 3:10).

(MacArthur) Perhaps a usage which gives us the simplest and clearest definition would be in John 15:13. Greater affection has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *philos*, his friend. In other words, it is a bond of intimacy which attaches you so deeply to a person that self-sacrifice, even to the point of death, could occur. Not every such use of the word “friend” implies that, but this one does. And then in verse 14, He says, “*You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.*” It’s a bond then of obedience. In verse 15, “*Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does.*” He’s not privy, he’s not intimate. “*But I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father I’ve made known unto you.*” You have entered into intimacy with Me. You have entered into affection with Me, to common cause, common interest, common enterprise, common objective.

And He goes on to say, verse 18, “*If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you’re not of the world I’ve chosen you out of the world; therefore, the world hates you.*” And He emphasizes that the union is so great and the identification is so strong that the way the world treats Christ is the way the world would treat the friends of Christ because they are so commonly bound to Christ. So, there it is used to describe the loving affection believers have toward the Lord Jesus Christ which sets them fully apart from the world. And may I take it a step further and remind you that the John 15 passage tells us very clearly that a believer is a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ, right? You are my friends if you do

whatever I command you. I used to call you servants, now you've been promoted to intimacy.

And so Jesus is saying, "I see you as my friends." And so if believers and disciples are identified as the friends of Christ, then people who are identified as the friends of the world have entered into a deep affection with the world, as the friends of Christ have entered in to a deep affection with Him.

Affections Gone Wrong:

(Wiersbe) The difference between the true believer and the unbeliever isn't the presence of faith, because everybody lives by faith in something. The difference is in the **OBJECT** of that faith. . . The Christian believer lives by faith in the living God, and what He has revealed in His Word. . . Faith means obeying God regardless of the feelings within us, the circumstances around us, or the consequences before us.

(MacArthur) In the context of the book of Daniel, we recall that the Jewish people had been taken from Jerusalem and made captives in the land of Babylon to the east. According to Psalm 137:5-6, the Jews expressed their devotion to the city: *"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."* Even in captivity they longed for the city of Jerusalem and said that they would rather sacrifice anything than lose their great love for the city.

This marvelously blessed city, which God had chosen for a place in redemptive history above all other cities, became the object of misdirected zeal. When, in the course of history, Israel had departed from faith in God and therefore had been taken into captivity, it became obvious that the people had done well in remembering Jerusalem, but had done very poorly in remembering what had made Jerusalem great. While remembering their love for the city, they had forgotten the place of God. They were loving the city without loving the God whose city it was. It was for this very reason that God had allowed the city to be destroyed and its people taken into captivity.

Abraham: The first time Jerusalem was ever mentioned in the Bible was in Genesis 14, so that makes it pretty old. We find that in the city there was a *"priest of the most high God"* [priest Melchizedek was the king of Salem; an example and prophecy of the Messiah's role as our Perfect Priest (v.18). However, at that time, the city wasn't called Jerusalem, but Salem. Salem, which means "Peace," was most likely an ancient name for the city, which later became known as Jerusalem.

There was a famous mountain in the middle of that city called Mount Moriah, on which Abraham actually prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, and where God subsequently provided a ram. How fitting it was that before the city had even become the center of redemption it would one day become. God had marked it out as a place where He had provided a sacrifice.

Joshua: The first specific reference to Jerusalem is found in the tenth chapter of Joshua. After the children of Israel had come out of the Egyptian captivity and had been led into the Promised Land by Joshua, they came to the knowledge of this particular city of Canaan known as Jerusalem. It stood like other cities, such as Ai and Jericho, in the path of the conquering Israelites. Soon after this, it begins to dominate biblical teaching. God marvelously set His affection on that city. And God has great plans for it yet in the future.

Jerusalem is an amazing place. Situated on a plateau and surrounded on three sides by valleys three to four hundred feet deep, Jerusalem was a natural defense. With only its north side on the same level as the surrounding topography, it was a relatively easy city to defend, because there was only one effective way for an enemy to attack it. This ideal setting for a city was to eventually become the possession of the Israelites who came into the land of Canaan.

David: Not much was said about Jerusalem until David became king. Having reigned for seven years in Hebron, which is about twenty miles south of Jerusalem and located in a valley that was difficult to defend, David decided to move the capital city to Jerusalem. That move is recorded in 2 Samuel 5:7. From that time, Jerusalem became the royal capital where David reigned for another thirty-three years. Synonymously known as Mount Zion, because of the name of the hill on which the City of David stood, Jerusalem became the political, economic, religious, and social center of Jewish life. And may I add, it is the center of God's redemptive plan from the birth of . . .

Jesus: It was just down the road from Jerusalem that the Messiah was born, and it was just outside the wall of Jerusalem that He died and rose again. It will be next to Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives where He will descend before He will finally enter the city and establish His throne.

The following was written by Professor Alexander Tyler approximately 230 years ago while our 13 original colonies were still a part of Great Britain. He was writing about the fall of the Athenian Republic over 2000 years earlier. [*The first democratic government in Ancient Greece (Alexander Tyler was a Scottish*

advocate, judge, writer and historian who was a Professor of Universal History, and Greek and Roman Antiquities at the University of Edinburgh]).

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse [excessive gratuities] from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith
From spiritual faith to great courage
From courage to liberty
From liberty to abundance
From abundance to selfishness
From selfishness to complacency
From complacency to apathy
From apathy to dependency
From dependency back again into bondage.

1 Corinthians 10:1-14 Commentary by Warren Wiersbe:

Paul uses Israel to illustrate the temptations and sins of God's people. While Israel in the OT is different from the church in the NT (note v. 32), there are several parallels between the two.

Paul compares its passing through the sea and under the cloud to the believer's experience of baptism. Just as Christian baptism identifies the believer with Christ, so Israel's "baptism" identified the people with Moses. Israel was delivered from Egypt by the blood of the lamb just as Christians are delivered from the world and sin by the cross. God opened the sea to let the Israelites through, thus separating them from their slavery in Egypt; in like manner, the resurrection of Christ has separated the Christian from the world and the bondage of the flesh. The Jews ate manna, and Christians feed on Christ, the Bread of Life, as they partake of the Word. Israel drank water supernaturally provided, and Christians drink the living water (John. 4:10-14) of salvation and the refreshing water of the Spirit (John. 7:37-39). Some are puzzled by "that spiritual rock that followed them" (v. 4), as though a literal rock rolled along in the wilderness with the Jews. Two explanations are possible: (1) Paul states that a spiritual rock followed them, and certainly Christ did travel with His people and met their needs; (2) the word "them" is not in the original text, so that Paul may

be saying, "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed [after the manna was given]." First the bread, then the water followed.

God was "not well pleased" with them (v. 5), which is the same Gk. word as "castaway" in 9:27. They were disapproved; they lost their lives because of sin. They lusted (Num. 11:34); they worshiped idols (Ex. 32:1-14); they committed fornication (Num. 25:1-9); they tempted God by deliberately trying His patience (Num. 21:4-Num. 21:9); they complained (Num. 16:41-Num. 16:50). What a list of sins! Yet, God had to judge their sins even though they had been wonderfully delivered from Egypt. Spiritual privileges never give us license to sin. Rather, they lay upon us the greater responsibility to obey God and glorify Him.

The people of God, whether in the OT or the NT, must never presume to sin. In v. 12, Paul warns the overconfident, and then encourages the fearful in v. 13.

II. The Danger of Fellowshiping with Demons (10:14-22)

Paul uses the Lord's Supper to illustrate his point that while idols are not real (8:4-6), Satan can use idols to lead people astray. This is not superstition, for Deut. 32:17 and 21 clearly teach that demons can be worshiped through idols. Just as the believer has fellowship (communion) with Christ in partaking of the cup and loaf, and just as OT priests had fellowship with God as they feasted on the sacrifices from the altar, so an idolater has fellowship with demons in his idolatrous feast. Paul is actually describing "Satan's communion service" here! Just as Satan has a counterfeit church and gospel, so he has a counterfeit communion service. Anthropologists may study and admire heathen worship and idols, but God says the whole system is of the devil and is actually demon worship. Wherever there are idols, there will be demons.

The Believer's Rest - Hebrews 4 Wiersbe Commentary:

God promised rest to the people of Israel, but they failed to enter that rest because of disobedience stemming from unbelief. God has promised a rest for His own today--peace in the midst of trial, victory in spite of seeming impossible problems. This "life of rest" in our spiritual Canaan is called "going on unto perfection (maturity)" in 6:1; "the full assurance of hope" in 6:11; "inheriting the promises" in 6:12. Keep in mind that the readers of Hebrews were going through a time of testing (10:32-39; 12:3-14; 13:13 13:13) and were tempted, like Israel of old, to "go back" into the old life. God had promised them a rest of victory, yet they were in danger of falling short of it. God had given them the Word, but they would not "mix it with faith" (4:2) and apply it to their own lives. Again, see the importance of the Word of God in the life of the believer.

The writer's argument runs like this: God has promised a rest to His people (v. 1), but Israel failed to enter that rest (4:6). His promise still stands, because Joshua (v. 8) did not give them this spiritual rest, even though he did lead them into national rest (see Josh. 23:1). Otherwise, David would never have spoken about this rest centuries later in Ps 95. Conclusion: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (v. 9, NKJV). He relates this rest to God's Sabbath rest (vv. 4, 10); that is, it is a rest of satisfaction, not a rest after exhaustion. God was not tired after creating the worlds; the "rest" of Gen. 2:2 speaks of completion and satisfaction. It is a "Sabbath of the soul." This is the "rest of faith" that Jesus promises in Matt. 11:28-30. The "rest" of Matt. 11:28 is salvation, and it is a gift that we receive by faith. The rest of 11:30 is what we find day by day as we take His yoke and surrender. "Let us therefore fear" (v. 1) is God's warning, for many of His children have failed to enter into this life of rest and victory.

"Labor" here means "give diligence"--let us give diligence to enter into this rest. To "give diligence" is just the opposite of "drifting" (2:1-3). Nobody ever matured in the Christian life by being careless or lazy. Read carefully 2 Peter 1:4-12 and 3:11-18, where Peter three times exhorts believers to be diligent. If we are not diligent, we will repeat the failure of Israel and fail to enter the promised rest and inheritance. (Note that this is not salvation, but victory in the Christian life.)

What is the secret of entering into this rest? The Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 is the answer to every spiritual condition; if we allow the Word to judge us and expose our hearts, then we will not fail to inherit the blessing. Israel rebelled at the Word and would not "hear His voice" (Ps 95); therefore, they wandered in defeat for forty years. God's Word is a sword (see Rev. 1:16; 2:12-16; 19:13; Eph. 6:17). It pierces the heart (see Acts 5:33 and 7:54, where Israel again refused to yield to the Word). Too many believers fail to hear and heed God's Word and thus rob themselves of blessing. It takes diligence to mature spiritually, and so a believer needs to apply God's Word faithfully.

Conclusion - Wiersbe Commentary Heb 12:1-3:

If the Christians are to win the race, they must get rid of the weights and sins that make it hard for them to run. Most of all, they must keep their eyes on Christ as the goal! (Compare Phil. 3:12-16). Christ has already run this race of faith and conquered for us! He is the Author (Pioneer, Trailblazer) and Finisher of our faith; He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. What He starts, He finishes; He can see us through to victory.

Our Lord went through many trials while on earth. What was it that helped take Him through to victory? "The joy that was set before Him" (v. 2). This was His goal--the joy of presenting His church before the Father in heaven one day (Jude

24). (Note also John 15:11, 16:20-24, and 17:13). His battle against sin took Him to the cross and cost Him His life. Most of us will not run on that course; it will probably be our task to live for Him, not die for Him. "Consider Him!" "Look unto Jesus!" These words are the secret of encouragement and strength when the race gets difficult. We need to get our eyes off of ourselves, other people, and circumstances and get our eyes on Christ alone.

References:

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