

1. Last week I began an analysis of Daniel chapter three verses one, two and three.
2. When time ran out I was in the process of teaching the Doctrine of Wealth. We will resume with a "Summary" of some of that learned, but first let's look at an expanded translation of Dan 3:1-3.

Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Chaldean Empire, constructed an image of solid gold. The tall and skinny statue was ninety feet high and nine feet wide; this image was erected in a large open area located just outside the city of Babylon in the plain of Dura, an area normally used for military and equestrian games.

Dan 3:2 Nebuchadnezzar sent couriers to every province commanding that all princes (political rulers), governors (the provincial military commanders), captains (division commanders), judges (equivalent to provincial Chief Justice), treasurers (the CFO of each province), counsellors (prosecuting attorneys), sheriffs (district court judges), and all the rulers of the provinces (the subordinate administrators) come to the dedication.

Dan 3:3 The ostentatious entourages arrived from both the near and far provinces; in a display of great splendor on a day ordered by the King they all assembled in the plain for the dedication ceremony, each man with his subordinates was required to stand before the image.

Now let's briefly review what we learned about wealth last week:

1. According to Scripture, God's primary concern is not how much a man has, but how he thinks about the wealth he possesses.

1.1 The Bible speaks of a rich man who let his love of wealth keep him from the Kingdom

Mat 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Mat 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Mat 19:18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Mat 19:19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Mat 19:20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Mat 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Mat 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Mat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1.2 Earthly possessions relate primarily to four classifications of people.

1.2.1 First, those who are rich in the things of this earth and poor in spiritual assets.

1Sa 25:2 And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

1Sa 25:3 Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.

1.2.2 Second, those poor in this world's goods but rich toward God.

Jam 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Jam 2:5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Jam 2:6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

Jam 2:7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

1.2.3 Third, the host of people who are poor in both heavenly and earthly things. They are usually referred to as the unbelieving multitudes.

1.2.4 Fourth, those who have a great deal of this world's goods and who are also rich in heavenly blessings. We have already seen a number of Scriptural examples.

2. Times of affluence and great material prosperity create difficulties for some Christians. Such apparently was the case for Nebuchadnezzar.

Before continuing our study of Daniel chapter three, I want to quickly review the Doctrine of The Poor:

1. Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. In these verses you will find numerous uses of the English word " sluggard " or " slothful "; this is Atsel in the Hebrew; the word means idle, habitually lazy, lethargic, lean or indolent.

1.1 A failure to work and save for the future. Pro 6:6-11

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

Pro 6:7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

Pro 6:8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Pro 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

Pro 6:11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

Pro 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Pro 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

1.2 Wickedness or evil we call it reversionism - as a general rule God makes it tough on people who are negative toward Him.

Pro 10:3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

Pro 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

1.3 A drunkard or glutton will experience poverty.

Pro 23:20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat,

Pro 23:21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

1.4 Being industrious is a means of avoiding poverty. Foolish people pursuing impractical fantasies also make for poverty.

Pro 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

1.5 A slothful man is lazy and as a result is often poor.

Pro 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!

1.5.1 This would seem to be a good description of many on our welfare rolls today.

1.6 The indolent (in the Old Testament economy) were often lazy and as a result they ended up as slaves.

Pro 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.

1.7 The habitual lazy are very often wasteful.

Pro 12:27 The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possession.

1.8 There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 15:19

Pro 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

1.9 The slothful person will suffer hunger.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

1.10 The person who seeks a fast profit will often find poverty. The same is true for the miser.

Pro 28:22 A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Mal 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

2. No matter how hard we try to eliminate poverty, these efforts will prove futile; the poor will always be with us.

2.1 In the July 27, 1998 issue of Newsweek there appeared an article entitled "The Faces of Famine" which describes the world and its dilemma of pervasive poverty. I will read in part:

"Here we go again. Skeletal starving Africans are back in the news, this time from Sudan (a communist country at war with itself). If you are moved - and you'd have to be heartless not to be - operators are standing by to take your check ... If you have any doubts that your contributions will really help, the charities will assure you that food will reach these victims quickly and save their lives, at least until the next famine ... Now you can change the channel with the warm feeling that you have done what you can to fight hunger. I too feel like reaching for my checkbook when I see the photographs. But I know better. After spending nearly 20 years in Africa as an aid worker and journalist, I know that fighting hunger is anything but simple. And I have learned that any donation I might make may in fact insure that next year I will see fresh photographs of starving people...

2.2 This does not mean that we should refuse to perform what God commands with reference to assisting those less fortunate.

3. As we will see later God does provide certain mandates with reference to assistance.

Deu 15:11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Mat 26:11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.

3.1 Jesus' prediction of pervasive and everlasting poverty was part of a rebuke to the world's greatest liberal - Judas Iscariot.

Joh 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,  
Joh 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

Joh 12:6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

3.2 Judas like many "do gooders" loved the masses but hated the individual.

3.3 Judas like so many "do gooders" today knew better as to what should be done with your money.

4. It is the Lord who makes the poor and the rich; therefore, it is He who can eradicate poverty as well as bestow affluence.

1Sa 2:7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

Psa 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

Psa 75:6 No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man.

Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

5. Charity for the truly destitute is a bona fide function for establishment.

Pro 29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.

Exo 23:11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Lev 19:9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Lev 19:10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

5.1 The tithe paid to the national treasury every third year went to a fund designated for the Levite Priest and the truly poor of the land.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns,

Deu 14:29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

5.2 There is no authorization in Scripture for assisting the poor in other lands; internationalism is always evil. There is "one exception":

5.2.1 We are to evangelize the entire world, however, each national entity is responsible for what occurs within their national boundaries.

6. There is a special blessing for those who help the poor.

Pro 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Psa 41:1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.

Psa 41:2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.

6.1 There is not only establishment responsibility to assist the destitute but individual citizens are also to assist those in need.

7. There is a special discipline for those who ignore the needs of the poor.

Pro 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

7.1 Through poverty many unbelievers see their need for salvation.

Mar 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

Mar 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

8. The poor are fortunate, in one sense, for they avoid superficial/pseudo friendships which come from having wealth.

Pro 19:4 Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend desert him.

8.1 The poor are often the target for hypocrisy. Jam 2:1

Jam 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

9. The poor should in the local church have the same spiritual privileges as the wealthy.

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

10. As the Church Age evolved we find the epistles instructing believers with reference to the poor as follows.

11. We are to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's; we are to never think about revolution or disobeying authority.

11.1 When government exceeds its authority and eschews establishment principles we are to heed their mandates, even if the government steals from the rich by requiring more than a ten percent across the board income tax and foolishly throws money at every problem, including the eradication of some other country's poverty or going into outer space to try to find out how the earth was created, etc.

12. The epistles seem to demand that each local Church address poverty; it is however a matter uniquely the province of individuals within a local Church.

12.1 For example, benevolent funds were to be established within each local church to care for their indigent.

1Ti 5:3 Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren [or nephews in KJV], these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

1Ti 5:5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

1Ti 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

1Ti 5:7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

Jam 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

12.2 It should be noted all of the assistance was based on a free will offering without pressure.

13. Never do we find instruction to help those who can and will not work, in fact quite the contrary. 2Th 3:11-15

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

2Th 3:13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

2Th 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

13.1 In summary, let's look at a "problem passage" and apply what we have learned:

Act 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

End Lesson Taught 2-19-2001