

1. Last week I finished teaching the Doctrine of Wealth and then began the Doctrine of The Poor.

2. When time an out I was about to cover a problem passage--Acts 4:32.

2.1 As noted earlier the events of chapter three take place some time after the events described in chapter two.

2.2 We will resume some of that learned and then pick up with new material at point 15:1, 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 Justices), treasurers (the CFOs of each province), counsellors (prosecuting attorneys), sheriffs (district court judges), and all the rulers of the provinces (the subordinate administrators), come to a dedication ceremony.

Dan 3:3 The ostentatious entourages arrived from both near and far; 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.

3. Now let's resume our study of the poor:

1. Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. In the verses to follow you will find numerous uses of the English word "sluggard" or "slothful"; these are translations of the Hebrew noun/adjective Atsel; the word means idle, habitually lazy, lethargic, lean or indolent. Last week I gave you several reasons with Scriptures for poverty:

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

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; Pro 28:20

1.3 Being a drunkard or glutton. Pro 23:21    Ì

1.4 Pursuing impractical fantasies. Pro 28:19

1.5 Laziness. Pro 19:24

1.5.1 The indolent in fact in the Old Testament economy often ended up as slaves.  
Pro 12:24

1.5.2 The habitual lazy are very often wasteful. There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 12:27 and Pro 15:19

2. A slothful person will suffer hunger. Pro 19:15

3. The person who seeks a fast profit will often find poverty. The same is true for the miser. Pro 28:22; Mal 3:10

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

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

5. God does, we noted, provide certain mandates with reference to assistance. Deu 15:11; Mat 26:11

6. 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; Psa 113:7; Psa 75:6-7

7. Charity for the truly destitute is a bona fide function for establishment. Pro 29:14; Exo 23:11; Lev 19:9

7.1 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 14:28-29

8. There is a special blessing for those who help the poor. Pro 22:9; Psa 41:1-2

9. There is a special discipline for those who ignore the needs of the poor.  
Pro 21:13

10. The poor are fortunate, in one sense, for they avoid superficial/pseudo friendships which come from having wealth. Pro 19:4

11. The poor should in the local church have the same spiritual privileges as the wealthy.  
Jam 2:2-4

12. As the Church Age evolved we find the epistles instructing believers with reference to the poor.

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

13.1 When government exceeds its authority and eschews establishment principles we are to heed their mandates.

14. 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.

14.1 For example, benevolent funds were to be established within each local assembly to care for their indigent. 1Ti 5:3-7

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

15. Never do we find instruction to help those who can and will not work, in fact quite the contrary. 2Th 3:11-12

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.

16. Now for new material:

16.1 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.

15.2 There are those who teach this passage authorizes socialism/communism/liberalism as the Christian's economic/political system.

15.3 Nothing could be further from the truth in the light of a categorical study.

15.4 The ultimate welfare state cannot tolerate private property. The Bible very clearly establishes these rights.

Exo 20:15 "You shall not steal.

15.5 The problem passage is a clear display of Christian charity and did not in any way abolish the capitalistic right of private property or the first divine institution "volition." Again recall:

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

15.6 The welfare state is based on class hatred and a desire for equality of all peoples, even to the transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor by means of government force.

15.6.1 God is not an egalitarian. Heaven will not be a place of equality.

15.7 Such community of goods as set forth in our "problem passage" was not compulsory but voluntary as a way of eliminating special needs.

15.7.1 Keep in mind that Jerusalem was overflowing with many Jewish people and Gentiles coming from all over the world to worship during the Passover and those feasts immediately following The Passover.

15.7.2 In Jerusalem there were many converts from monotheistic Judaism who had converted and were now remaining in Jerusalem to await the Lord's return and the establishment of His Kingdom.

15.7.3 The disciples recall had not a clue about the Rapture. They believed in an imminent Messiah's return to set up the Jewish Kingdom.

15.7.4 They were misguided in their assumption that the Lord would immediately return for Israel.

15.7.5 After reviewing Peter's first and second sermons, it is clear these early church disciples had not learned of the Church Age and its insertion between the 1st and 2nd Advents of Jesus. The Church Age intercalation was not anticipated.

Act 2:12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Act 2:13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Act 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Act 2:15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Act 2:19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

Act 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

Act 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

15.7.6 Many of these people had extended their stay beyond original plans and were in special financial need.

15.7.7 The manifest needs of many precipitated a voluntary sharing in a time of great financial disparity.

15.7.8 This occasion is recorded for us in scripture as a beautiful display of oneness and caring among believers.

15.7.9 It must be observed this sharing was:

15.7.10 Voluntary on the part of each believer--compare Acts 4:32 with Acts 5:4

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.

Act 5:4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

15.7.11 Ananias was in trouble because he lied to the Holy Spirit, not because he did not give.

15.7.12 All of the those sharing were anticipating the Kingdom when as our Lord said repeatedly, "there will be no need for material things."

15.7.13 This was a time of great persecution and great need.

15.7.14 This act of sharing was restricted to the Jerusalem Church; we find no amplification in the epistles.

17. Now let's return to our verse and see if we can better identify those who were ordered to come to the "praise service".

1. "Princes" here refers to the political rulers and is both a Persian and an Akkadian word. The translation comes from CHASHED-ARPE -NAJA.

1.1 More familiar to us is the equivalent Greek word, SATRAP. This was an executive officer, these men were the governors of the various provinces in the Empire.

2. "Governors" were the corps area commanders. The Chaldean word SIGE-NAJA simply means military commanders.

2.1 Nebuchadnezzar was smart: the power in every province was divided between the political and the military; if necessary, the king could play one against the other to maintain a balance of power and insure his control.

3. Each province had its own governmental organization. The "captains," PACHA-WATHA in Chaldean, means a division commander.

4. The "judges" were not judges at all. The word ADAR-GAZE-RAJA refers to a Chief Justice and thus the Chief Justice of a province.

5. GEDA-VE-RAJA, translated "treasurers," is of Persian in origin; best perhaps translated the secretary of the treasury of each Babylonian province.

6. "Counsellors," an old Persian word DETH-ABE-RAJA in the text means "a guardian of the law;" hence, they would be the prosecuting or district attorneys.

7. TIPH-TAJE, translated "sheriffs," means "to give a sentence." This office was equivalent to that of a district court judge.

8. Finally, we have "all the rulers," SHIL-TONE, which should be translated "all other subordinate rulers or officers."

9. "Were gathered together" refers to the convocation of the VIP's from each province who had assembled for the dedication ceremony.

10. "Had set up" is literally, "he caused it to be set up."

11. The Aphel perfect of the Chaldean verb QUM is the same as the Hophal (passive causative stem) of the Hebrew verb QUM.

12. It is interesting to note that although representatives of every category of leadership had been brought to the festivities, Daniel was not present.

13. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were alone to face a crisis.

14. Then an herald cried aloud, "To you it is commanded, Oh people, nations, and languages!"

15. Picture thousands of people assembled on a great plain. Every eye was turned toward the brilliant, golden image gleaming in the sun.

15.1 Remember, this extravagant display of precious metal was ninety feet tall, so it was possible for everyone to see it.

16. No doubt a great babble of voices arose as the throng of observers exclaimed in wonder at the dazzling sight. To attract their attention, "an herald cried aloud."

17. It is interesting to note that the Chaldean Empire was composed of "people" (racial divisions), "nations" (geographical entities), and "languages.

End Lesson Taught 2-25-2001