

1. Last week I taught three verses twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five.
2. Before continuing let me give you an expanded translation of Daniel chapter three verses fourteen through twenty-five.

Dan 3:14 Nebuchadnezzar asked the three boys, "did you intentionally not bow down to worship my god? I hope you now realize that all of you are in serious trouble; the mere act of refusing to bow and worship, whether intentional or not is a serious offense.

Dan 3:15 If your actions were not deliberate then the next time you hear the music be sure you fall down and worship the image and if you do I will forget the whole thing; be certain however, if you do not obey, you will be thrown into the fiery furnace and I can assure there is no god anywhere powerful enough to save you.

Dan 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not even have to consider our answer."

Dan 3:17 O King, supreme ruler of Babylon, if it is our God's desire to deliver us, He is infinitely able to rescue us from that fiery furnace; we know as a fact that our Jehovah God has the power to do whatever He chooses to do."

Dan 3:18 But even if Jehovah God doesn't choose to save us, we still won't worship your gods and the idolatrous image you have erected."

Dan 3:19 Nebuchadnezzar's face twisted with anger at the response from the three young men. He shouted an order "heat the furnace seven times hotter than it has ever been heated!"

Dan 3:20 The King obviously wanted his command carried out immediately; so he ordered the special body guards who stood by to bind the hands and feet of the young Jewish hostages and take the three of them to the furnace where they were to be cremated alive.

Dan 3:21 The special guard unit immediately complied with the King's order, they tied up the three Jews who were still dressed in their royal robes, trousers, jewelry and turbans; they were dragged to the furnace where they were to be thrown alive into the blazing inferno.

Dan 3:22 The furnace had been heated beyond prudence; the soldiers without proper planning, approached the large furnace, opened the door and the flames from inside blew out the open door engulfing and killing some number of the king's body guards.

Dan 3:23 The Squad Leader selected replacements who took Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and threw them headlong into the fire.

Dan 3:24 After King Nebuchadnezzar arrived from the Palace, he looked into the furnace and was astounded, what he saw caused him to leap to his feet; the King turned to his chief of staff, "Didn't we throw all three men into the fire and were not their hands and feet tied?" One of his cabinet members answered, "Certainly, O king."

Dan 3:25 King Nebuchadnezzar then said: "Look, I see four men unbound; in fact they are all four walking around in the furnace; there are flames leaping all around them but they seem to be unharmed and the fourth man looks like a son of one of our gods."

3. When time ran out last week I was reviewing the condition of Nebuchadnezzar's soul as an unbeliever who went negative at God-consciousness.

3.1 Let me here give you five common rationales for God-consciousness:

3.1 Religious approach-God must exist because so many people believe in Him.

3.2 Moral approach-man's conscience leads him toward virtue and truth because the order of the universe demands establishment.

3.3 Ontological approach-the human mind demands a perfect deity as an ideal. Ontology is the science that deals with the existence of all things.

3.4 Teleological approach-there is too much order in the universe therefore there must have been a designer of supra-proportion.

3.4.1 The body is made up of various elements and compounds and there are plenty of these around so why do we not see man occur if there was no teleology. Teleology is the science that all things which exist were produced for the end purpose which they fulfill.

3.5 Cosmological approach-the logic of cause and effect demands the existence of God.

3.5.1 If there was no cause and it just happened, why don't we see it happen again?

3.5.2 For example there are scientists who, as supreme empiricist, wonder about evolution given the fact that over an extended time we have seen no evidence of progression; and in fact fossil man/ape has often shown clear evidence that there is no orderly progression from old to new.

4. We earlier noted Nebuchadnezzar will not get saved until sometime later.

4.1 Sometime between chapters three and four he turns positive and received Christ as His Savior—as an Old Testament saint remember, his faith would have been faith in the Messiah to come.

5. A record of his testimony can be found in Daniel chapter four.

6. I want to review several key verses studied last week after which I want to return to our study of Dan 3:26.

6.1.1 The Introduction to the King's testimony:

Dan 4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly!

Dan 4:2 It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

Dan 4:3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Dan 4:4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.

6.1.2 The Dream

Dan 4:5 I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.

Dan 4:9 I said, "Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me.

Dan 4:10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous.

Dan 4:11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.

Dan 4:12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

Dan 4:13 "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.

Dan 4:14 He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

Dan 4:15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. "Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.

Dan 4:16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal ...

6.1.3 The Interpretation:

Dan 4:19 Then Daniel (also called Beltshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Beltshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Beltshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!

Dan 4:20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth,

Dan 4:21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air--

Dan 4:22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

Dan 4:23 "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'

Dan 4:24 "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

Dan 4:25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Dan 4:26 The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

6.1.4 What Daniel Predicted Happened

Dan 4:28 All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan 4:29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,

Dan 4:30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

Dan 4:31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.

Dan 4:32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

Dan 4:33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

6.1.5 The King's Restoration:

Dan 4:34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

Dan 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Dan 4:36 At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

6.1.6 The Conclusion of His Testimony:

Dan 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Now let's return to our study of Daniel 3:26 and the suffering of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego:

1. This historical event of four men in the fire illustrates a tremendous principle in the doctrine of suffering.
2. God from His omniscience has designed human suffering for the blessing of the believer.
3. We, however only receive maximum benefit from suffering when there is a consistent daily intake of Bible doctrine in our souls.
4. Suffering helps us to move toward spiritual maturity and occupation with Christ.
5. Remember the principle: if you are ever in the furnace of adversity, there is only one way to cope with that situation; we must trust God for our deliverance, said another way we must live by faith and not by sight!
6. In other words, He may permit the suffering to continue; but you can ride it out in perfect peace and happiness by means of His provisions.
7. These three men had now reached their greatest moment in the midst of maximum pressure, Jesus Christ walked with them in the middle of that fiery furnace!
8. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego no doubt earlier suffered on their way to the furnace but in their deliverance, they were glorified and in addition, God Himself was also glorified in that deliverance.
9. Suffering is something we will all experience.
10. Before we return to our three believers in the fire with the Lord, let me give you 9 reasons why Christians suffer:
 - to glorify God in the Angelic Conflict--Book of Job

- to learn self-discipline

Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

- to demonstrate the sufficiency of God and to control certain types of personalities

2Co 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

2Co 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

2Co 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2Co 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

- to help us empathize with others who are suffering

2Co 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

2Co 1:4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

- to learn the value of doctrine

Psa 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Psa 119:68 You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.

Psa 119:69 Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart.

Psa 119:70 Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law.

Psa 119:71 It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

Psa 119:72 The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

- to illustrate God's message to God's people

Hos 1:2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."

Hos 1:3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son ...

Hos 3:1 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

Hos 3:2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

Hos 3:3 Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

Hos 3:4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol.

Hos 3:5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

- because of a believer's very own arrogance and bad decisions

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

- to develop patience and reward in eternity

Rom 5:3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

- to manifest the fruits of the Spirit and to witness for our Lord

2Co 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

2Co 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

2Co 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

2Co 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

11. There is never any hurt for a Christian from the fires of affliction when the Lord is in the furnace too!

12. Our Lord has promised to not only go with us but to precede us.

13. Also, in principle, the flame of suffering burns away the ropes that bind and frees us for fellowship with Christ. (Isa. 43:2b)

Isa 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

14. Nebuchadnezzar noted and exclaimed that "they have no hurt." This demonstrated that because of these believers' relationship with Jesus Christ, any place for them was a safe place.

15. "The form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Recall as earlier noted." The term "Son of God is mistranslated; the vocabulary form found in the manuscript is the Chaldean BAR ELAHIN, better rendered, "a son of the gods."

15.1 Remember Nebuchadnezzar was an unbeliever; he was in fact a believer in the idols of the Babylonian pantheon.

15.2 The King expressed himself in terms of polytheism, he ascribed the fourth figure as belonging to the race of gods.

Since we have been away from Daniel chapter three for a while I want to again give you an expanded translation of Dan 3:25:

Expanded Translation:

King Nebuchadnezzar then said: Ò Look, I see four men and none of them are bound; in fact they are all four walking around in the furnace; there are flames abounding but they seem to be unharmed and the fourth man looks like one of the sons of the gods.

Now let's see what we can learn from verse twenty-six:

KJV

Dan 3:26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

NIV

Dan 3:26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire,

1. The fact that the furnace had cooled sufficiently to allow Nebuchadnezzar to approach the door without harm indicates that several hours had passed.

2. As the king waited, perhaps he pondered the miracle he had witnessed; he may have even recalled his earlier statement "that no god" could preserve life in the midst of the overheated inferno.

3. When Nebuchadnezzar called to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he acknowledged their relationship to the Messiah by saying, "Ye servants of the most high God."

4. This statement "the most high God" is a reference back to Daniel chapter two when he acknowledged the power of Daniel's God; he did not at that time believe in the Messiah to come but rather he was simply paying homage to a powerful new member of "his pantheon."

Dan 2:46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.

Dan 2:47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

5. This statement, however, did not go beyond heathen thinking; he merely considered the God of the Jews to be a greater god than the gods of the pantheon.

5.1 Although Nebuchadnezzar was God conscious, he definitely had not reached the point of salvation.

6. When the three "came forth," they were alone. Had Jesus Christ remained, Nebuchadnezzar might have felt coerced into a false position.

7. Since God never forces Himself on anyone, He did not deal with Nebuchadnezzar at that time.

8. Through His omniscience, God knew that because Nebuchadnezzar had been able to capture Jerusalem so easily, he had low regard for the God of Israel who had failed to deliver the Jews in wartime.

8.1 The king in chapter two and three is seen gradually moving toward a point of being positive to the love overtures of God.

9. Little did the king suspect that he was being used by God to discipline the Jews.

10. Up to this time, Nebuchadnezzar's only contact with Christ had come from the testimonies of Jeremiah (Jer. 39:11 and 12) and Daniel (Dan. 2:46 and 47).

Jer 39:11 Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard:

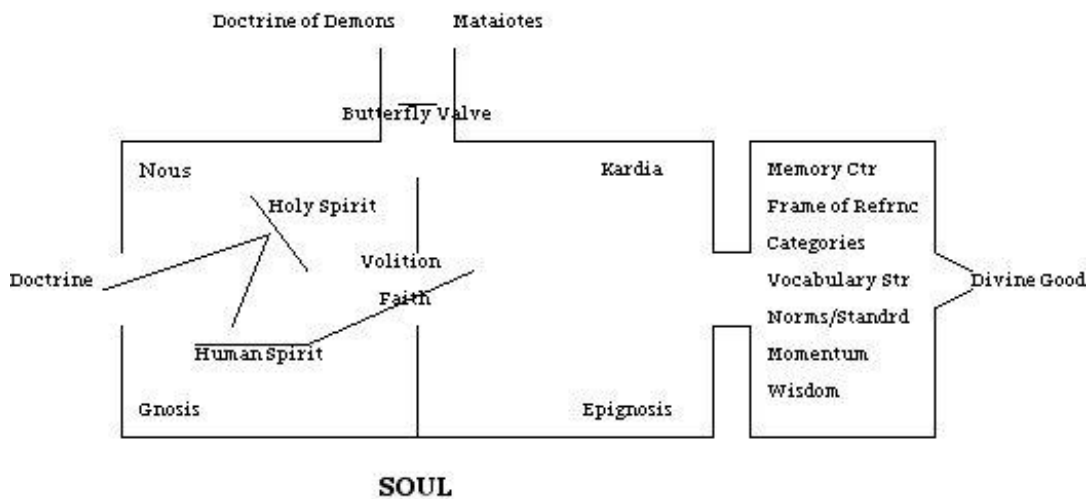
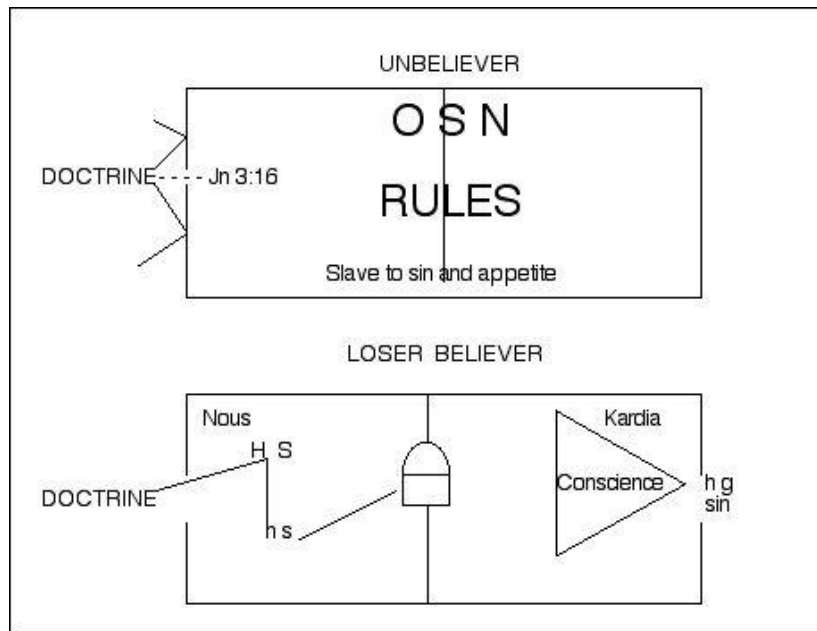
Jer 39:12 "Take him and look after him; don't harm him but do for him whatever he asks."

Dan 2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.

Dan 2:47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

11. As mature believers, they would not have attempted to explain the fourth and fifth cycles of discipline to an unbeliever, since this would have only obscured the issue of salvation.

11.1 Only God the Holy Spirit can make clear salvation doctrine and this is done supernaturally.



12. All believers should remember this principle: discernment of spiritual phenomena is the monopoly of a believer through the function of God's grace apparatus for perception.

13. The deliverance from the fiery furnace would serve to open the mind of Nebuchadnezzar toward Christ.

13.1 Soul winning is teamwork and often involves the testimony, prayers, consistency and stability of many believers.

End Lesson Taught 4-22-2001