

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

From Furnace to Palace

2020, Quarter 1, Lesson 4

Sabbath (January 18): From Furnace to Palace

The dramatic story of Daniel 3 contains many powerful and timely lessons for us today. In this week's study we will see how Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, and the steadfast faith of the three Hebrews, provide a striking typological portrayal of the spiritual issues that will engulf the world at the very end of time. Even more importantly, this amazing story reveals the key to remaining faithful to God in our own lives, just as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did:

Thus these youth, imbued with the Holy Spirit, declared to the whole nation their faith, that He whom they worshiped was the only true and living God. This demonstration of their own faith was the most eloquent presentation of their principles. In order to impress idolaters with the power and greatness of the living God, His servants must reveal their own reverence for God. They must make it manifest that He is the only object of their honor and worship, and that no consideration, not even the preservation of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to idolatry. These lessons have a direct and vital bearing upon our experience in these last days. {HP 149.4}

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ezekiel 28:11-15. In what setting did sin arise? (Sin arose in the heart of an angel who stood next to God in heaven. We could say, then, that sin began in Heaven's "Most Holy Place.")
- Read Revelation 11:19. In what setting do the final prophetic events of Revelation take place? (John sees a door opened into the Most Holy Place in heaven's temple, and immediately after earth's final events are described in Revelation 12-19.) What does this tell us about the importance of understanding the lessons revealed by the sanctuary, its furniture, and its services? (It's very important!)

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin.

It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. {GC 488.3}

- Read Isaiah 14:12-14. What was, and continues to be, the primary issue in the great controversy between good and evil? (Worship is the central issue. As we will discover later this week, the story of Daniel 3 centers on the issue of worship, and its setting even evokes a type of "sanctuary.")
- Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4. What does this passage reveal about the setting of the antichrist power's end-time assault on God and the saints? (This attack happens in the setting of "the temple of God.")

Sunday (January 19): The Golden Image

Some time after Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the multi-metal man and the stone that crushes it, the king erects an enormous golden image on the plain of Dura. The scene that

follows—an egomaniacal pagan king demanding worship from his followers—perhaps doesn’t surprise us too much given its ancient historical context. However, the lessons and warnings contained in this story are very relevant for us today.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 1:19-20 and 2:46-47. Before this story in Daniel 3, God had given Nebuchadnezzar at least two prior experiences where the king could witness the power and wisdom of the Hebrews’ God. How would you describe the effect of those prior experiences on King Nebuchadnezzar? (Temporary and, ultimately, ineffective in changing the king.) What does this reveal about the difference between knowledge and conversion? (Knowledge can help lead us to conversion, but it doesn’t guarantee that we will surrender ourselves to God.) What does it tell you about God’s character that He keeps working with this pagan king through these various experiences? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 3:1. In spite of these prior experiences with the God of the Hebrews, what does Nebuchadnezzar create on the plains of Dura? (A golden image.)
- Read Genesis 1:26,27. In what ways might Nebuchadnezzar’s erection of the golden image be an imitation or counterfeit of God’s work at creation? (Just as God “created man in his own image,” Nebuchadnezzar also “made an image of gold.” The Hebrew word *tselem*, translated as “image,” is used in both passages.) In what ways was Nebuchadnezzar’s image probably a reflection of himself? (It was made to glorify him, to signify the unending power of his kingdom, and to direct worship to himself.)
- Read the statement below and discuss what it reveals about Nebuchadnezzar, and about us:

None but God can subdue the pride of man’s heart. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot regenerate ourselves. In the heavenly courts there will be no song sung, To me that loved myself, and washed myself, redeemed myself, unto me be glory and honor, blessing and praise. But this is the keynote of the song that is sung by many here in this world. They do not know what it means to be meek and lowly in heart; and they do not mean to know this, if they can avoid it. The whole gospel is comprised in learning of Christ, His meekness and lowliness. What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself.—Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers, Series A, 9:61 (1897). {TM 456.2,3}

Monday (January 20): The Call to Worship

The name Dura literally means “walled place,” and given the story’s focus on worship, perhaps it is not a stretch to see this Babylonian plain as a type of counterfeit sanctuary. As we will see today, Revelation 13 reveals that the story in Daniel 3 is also a prophecy of things that will take place just before Christ’s second coming, when the world is united in false worship.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 3:1-7 and Revelation 13:11-18. Discuss and summarize any parallels you see between these two stories. Suggested answers include:
 - Both stories occur under Babylon’s control and influence (Dan. 3:1 and Rev. 17).
 - The erection of an image as the focus of worship (Dan. 3:1 and Rev. 13:14).
 - The prominence of the number *six* (Dan. 3:1 and Rev. 13:18).

- The gathering of “all people” to worship the image (Dan. 3:2-3 and Rev. 13:14).
 - The use of sensory cues to initiate the worship (Dan. 3:4-5 and Rev. 13:13-14).
 - The enforcement of prescribed worship (Dan. 3:4-5 and Rev. 13:15).
 - A death penalty enacted for failure to worship the image (Dan. 3:6 and Rev. 13:15).
- For what reasons might God have allowed Nebuchadnezzar to build this image and demand worship from his subjects, including the three Hebrews? (God knew that this situation would ultimately provide an opportunity for His power and glory to be revealed through His faithful servants.) For what reasons do you think God will allow a similar situation to develop at the end of time as revealed in Revelation? (For the same reasons! God was glorified in a localized setting in Daniel 3, and He will be glorified before the entire world through Revelation’s final events.)

Tuesday (January 21): The Test of Fire

When the music starts playing on the plain of Dura, all the people fall down to worship. All, that is, except three—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Their courageous stand of faith in the face of a fiery death continues to encourage and strengthen people today. Let’s take a closer look at their response to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 3:13-14. What connection is brought out here between service and worship? (They are really the same thing. Jesus said in Matthew 4:10, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”)
- Read Revelation 13:16. Where can the mark of the beast be “received”? (In the forehead or in the hand.) What connection or significance might these body parts have with service and worship? (The hand signifies service, and the forehead indicates an attitude or decision to worship. In the end, it won’t matter whether we truly believe that Revelation’s beast power deserves worship, or if we merely “play along” and pretend to serve and obey. In God’s sight obedience and compliance in matters of worship are the same as mental consent and agreement.)
- Read Daniel 3:15. What does Nebuchadnezzar’s statement here reveal about the real issue behind his demand for worship? (He believes that there is no God that can deliver people out of his hands. This is a direct assault on the existence, power, and goodness of the God of heaven.) In what ways is Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude reflected by the two beast powers at the end of time in Revelation 13? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 3:16-18. What is the most remarkable aspect of the three Hebrews’ faith to you? (Answers will vary. Their faith is similar to that of Jacob [Genesis 32:24-30] and Job [Job 13:15], both of whom remain faithful even when God seems to fight against them.)

The Hebrew worthies could not be consumed, because the form of the fourth, the Son of God, was with them. So in the day of the coming of the Lord, smoke and flame will be powerless to harm the righteous. Those who are united with the Lord will escape unscathed. Earthquakes, hurricanes, flame, and flood cannot injure those who are prepared to meet their Saviour in peace. But those who rejected our Saviour, and scourged and crucified Him, will be among those who will be raised from the dead to behold His coming in the clouds of heaven, attended by the heavenly host—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.... {UL 261.5}

Wednesday (January 22): The Fourth Man

When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the flames of his execution chamber, he surely was shocked to see not three, but four men. In disbelief, he said, “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25). God’s method of delivering His three servants from the fire speaks volumes about the character of God and His plan of salvation—He has chosen to deal with sin by passing through the fire with us.

Discussion Questions:

- Read John 1:14. How significant is it to you that the Son of God “was made flesh”? (Answers will vary.) What does this reveal about God’s character? (God has not chosen to deal with sin in the least painful way to Him. Rather, He has demonstrated His willingness to share in the pain and agony of sin in order to save us from it.)
- Read Hebrews 2:14-18. What additional insights does this passage reveal about the Son of God’s identification with the human race? (He truly became like one of us, in order to forgive us and redeem us from sin, and to re-create God’s image within us. We have a Savior that knows what the power and strength of sin is like, and that offers the power needed to overcome it.)
- Read 2 Corinthians 2:2,3. What principle in this verse was illustrated in the lives of the three Hebrews? (God fulfilled His promise to live through them to such an extent that their words and their lives were a living testimony to the power and glory of God.) How can we each experience this same kind of relationship with God? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the following passage and discuss the importance for every Christian of having this kind of experience with God:

How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.... {CC 252.4}

He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a “God of gods,” able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him.4 {CC 252.5}

Thursday (January 23): The Secret of Such a Faith

The faith of Azariah, Hananiah, and Mishael is a shining example of true, Biblical, Christ-centered faith. For us living today at the end of time, obtaining and living this kind of faith is essential. In today’s lesson we will take a closer look at what real faith is.

Discussion Questions:

- Read the following verses in Hebrews 11 and discuss what each one reveals about faith:
 - Hebrews 11:1. (True faith requires us to believe and act in the unseen spiritual realm, rather than merely in the visible physical realm.)

- Hebrews 11:3. (True faith is rooted in our acceptance of God's role as Creator of all things, and in the power of His word.)
- Hebrews 11:5,6. (True faith believes that God exists, but it also goes far beyond this. It also believes in the loving and just character of God.)
- Hebrews 11:7. (True faith is reflected in our actions.)
- Hebrews 11:8. (True faith follows God's leading even when it doesn't make sense to us.)
- Hebrews 11:24-27. (True faith leads us to give up those things that stand between us and God's will for our lives.)
- Read Revelation 14:12. What does this verse reveal that true faith will lead us to do? (It will lead us to willingly and lovingly keep God's commandments. Compare Romans 1:5, which explains that "we have received grace...for obedience to the faith," and John 14:15, where Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments.") For what reasons is obedience a natural result of faith? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the statement below from the book *The Desire of Ages*, and discuss the importance of recognizing the difference between faith and presumption:

But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. {DA 126.1}

Friday (January 24): Daniel and the Three Angels' Messages

The books of Daniel and Revelation are both extremely important for us to understand today. Their individual messages are important, but an added blessing comes when we study them together. Consider the following statements, taken from the book *Testimonies to Ministers*, regarding the study of these two books:

We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick succession. Every element of power is about to be set to work. Past history will be repeated; old controversies will arouse to new life, and peril will beset God's people on every side. Intensity is taking hold of the human family. It is permeating everything upon the earth.... Study Revelation in connection with Daniel, for history will be repeated.... We, with all our religious advantages, ought to know far more today than we do know. {TM 116.2,3}

The books of Daniel and the Revelation should be bound together and published. ...It was my idea to have the two books bound together, Revelation following Daniel, as giving fuller light on the subjects dealt with in Daniel. The object is to bring these books together, showing that they both relate to the same subjects. {TM 117.2}

When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart. {TM 114.3}

In today's lesson, we will briefly examine one set of parallels between the books of Daniel and Revelation. We will expand on these parallels in the weeks to come, but today we will lay the basic foundation for this continued study.

The Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14 contain God's last message of warning and mercy to the world before Christ's Second Coming. These messages not only explain *what* is about to happen (the fall of Babylon and the mark of the beast), but, even more importantly, reveal *how* we should be living so that these final events do not rip us away from our faith in God. Given the importance of these messages in Revelation, it should not be surprising to find them reflected in the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel contains living demonstrations of what it means to believe, and live, the Three Angels' Messages. Below we will look at a short summary of some of these parallels, keeping in mind that future lessons will cover some of these stories in greater detail:

1. A few lessons back we discovered some of the many parallels between the erection of Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 3 and the enforcement of the mark of the beast in Revelation 13. In Daniel 3, there are three faithful Hebrews that stand up for God and true worship. Although threatened with death, God delivers them and glorifies His name in the process. In Revelation 13 and 14, God's saints at the end of time face a similar situation, and prophecy reveals that they, too, will faithfully stand up for God and true worship by sharing and living the Three Angels' Messages.
2. In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar finally learns what it means to live for God's glory, and not his own. In Daniel 4:37 he writes, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." The connection with Revelation 14:7 should not be missed, where the first angel says, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."
3. Daniel 5 records the fall of Babylon in the midst of a blasphemous and wicked party. The connections with the second angel's warning in Revelation 14:8 is easy to see: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Just as King Belshazzar "praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (Daniel 5:4), the merchants of spiritual Babylon at the end of time "mourn" when no one is left to buy their "merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet..." (Revelation 18:11,12).
4. Finally, Daniel 6 relates the faithfulness of Daniel in continuing to worship God even in the face of a law, with a death decree, demanding worship of King Darius (Daniel 6:4-11). Similarly, Revelation's third angel warns about receiving the mark of the beast, which will involve worship laws and death decrees for those that refuse to comply (Revelation 13:15-16 and 14:9-10). God delivers Daniel from the lion's den, just as He promises to deliver His saints at the end of time.