

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Daniel)

ch.2:36-3:30

by Zac Poonen

The sermon explores the decline of humanity, the rise and fall of the kingdoms of the world, and the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:00:38

Scripture: Psalm 137:1, Daniel 2:47, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:20-21, Matthew 21:42

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the sovereignty of God as depicted in the book of Daniel. He highlights God's sovereignty over the physical bodies of Daniel and his friends, as well as over the governments of the world and the elements of nature. The speaker also discusses the four kingdoms that would rule the world from the time of Daniel until the coming of Christ, with the Roman Empire being the final one. The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing for God and the assurance that He will stand with believers in times of trial and suffering.

Transcript

Daniel, chapter 2. Last week we were looking at this dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. We saw that Daniel gave a description to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 31. Daniel, chapter 2, verse 31.

And we saw this image that he saw in the dream, as it says in verse 32, where the head was made of gold, the breast and the arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, and its legs of iron, and its feet with the ten toes, partly of iron and partly of clay. And that was the dream. And we saw also that at each stage the value of the metal became inferior to the previous one, showing the declining, deteriorating nature of humanity as we approach the end of the age.

Now we are today in the last days and humanity has deteriorated tremendously, morally that is. And then Daniel gives the interpretation in verse 36. This was the dream, he says, and now we will tell the interpretation to the king.

You, O king, verse 37, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory. Now here we find that God is called the God of heaven. He is not called Jehovah, which is the covenant name by which he revealed himself to Israel.

God was in no covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, but he was the God who ruled in the heavens and who controlled the affairs of earth. Therefore he is called the God of heaven. And that is a phrase that comes very often in the books related to the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah and other books like Daniel, the God of heaven.

And he says, it is God who has given you this kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory. And again in verse 38, wherever the sons of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, God has given them to your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. Twice you find this word, God has given.

Now, earlier on, Daniel himself had admitted that he had no wisdom to explain this dream, but God had given him that wisdom. The difference between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar was that Daniel recognized that everything he had, including wisdom, was from God, whereas Nebuchadnezzar did not recognize that his kingdom and his power and his glory were from God. And that is one fundamental difference between a true disciple of Jesus Christ and one who is not a disciple.

One who is a disciple recognizes that everything he has, material, intellectual, spiritual, every blessing is from God. So he says, you are the head of gold. So the head of gold symbolized the Babylonian kingdom, headed up by Nebuchadnezzar.

And Daniel says in verse 39, after you, there will arise another kingdom inferior to you. The kingdom of Babylon ruled the world, the known world, for about 70 years, and after that they were defeated by a kingdom called the kingdom of Medo-Persia. It was a joint kingdom of Media and Persia together, called Medo-Persia, and that's represented by the silver part of the body.

That is, the breast and arms of silver represent Medo-Persia, the second kingdom. And the third kingdom, after that, it says in verse 39, the middle, another third kingdom of bronze. That is the belly and thighs, which will rule over all the earth.

That is the known world, and that is the kingdom of Greece, which we know was ruled by Alexander the Great. Now that was nearly 300 years after this time, but God gave Daniel a preview of what was going to come. And then after that, he says, verse 40, there will be a fourth kingdom, inferior in value, but as strong as iron, and that was the Roman Empire ruled by the Caesars, which was ruling the earth when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

So here was a preview of the four kingdoms that were going to rule the world from the time of Daniel right up to the time of the coming of Christ. And inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so like iron that breaks in pieces, and the Roman Empire was like that, it will crush and break all these other kingdoms in pieces. And then, now we want to see something here.

The Roman Empire ended a few centuries after Christ had died and risen again, but from the time of the day of Pentecost begins a new age in the dealings of God with man. And there we find a long period which has run on now for nearly 2,000 years, which we would call the Church Age. And at the end of this Church Age is going to come the feet, which is partly of iron and partly of clay.

There's a big gap there, which is not mentioned here in the statue, because there is not going to be any one world superpower after the Roman Empire until the last days, which is going to be the reign of the Antichrist. There's going to be many kingdoms here and there, but one that's going to rule the whole world. After the Roman Empire, there never has been one, but there will be one in the last days.

So here is a description of the kingdoms that rule the whole world, the known world that is. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then a big gap of 2,000 years, and then there's going to come the feet. And in the feet, there are 10 toes.

And we read about that when we studied Revelation, the 10 kings who would be headed up by the Antichrist. So Daniel got a preview of something that is going to happen 2,600 years after he lived. And it says here that the toes, verse 42, 10 toes were partly of iron and partly of pottery.

So some of the kingdom will be strong, that is dictatorship. And some of it will be brittle, that is democracy. And so Daniel was told that in the last times, there are going to be dictatorships, and they're going to be democracy.

And they're going to try and mingle together. But in that you saw the iron mixed with the common clay, they'll combine with one another in the seat of men, which probably means through intermarriage. But they will not adhere to one another.

The democracy and the dictatorship cannot mix, even as iron does not combine with clay. Now, if you remember, when we looked at Luke chapter 21, Jesus said that Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, Luke 21, 24, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. There is a phrase that Jesus used there called the times of the Gentiles.

The time, the word Gentile means non-Jew. And the times of the Gentiles relate to the Jewish nation. And it begins with the time when the Jewish nation went into captivity, 606 BC.

And the first kingdom that ruled the world in the times of the Gentiles began is Babylon. So we can say that this statue is a description of the times of the Gentiles that Jesus spoke of in Luke 21, 24, when Jerusalem would not be under the Jews. Babylon captured Jerusalem and then all the other kingdoms ruled.

And Jerusalem came back into the hands of the Jews just about 17 years ago, in June 1967. And so we see the beginning of the times of the Gentiles are at the head of the statue, and the end of the times of the Gentiles are at the feet. And we are in those days now.

And I just want to say this, that it says here in Daniel chapter 2, we saw that in the dream, that Nebuchadnezzar finally saw a stone that struck the statue and that filled the whole earth. We see the explanation of that in verse 44 and 45. And in the days of those kings, that is the last ten kings headed up by the Antichrist, the God of heaven, notice that phrase again, the God who rules in the heaven, will set up a kingdom, that is the kingdom of Jesus Christ, that will never be destroyed.

These kingdoms were all destroyed, but the kingdom Jesus Christ is going to set up will never be destroyed. And that kingdom will not be passed on to another people. Nobody is going to take over that kingdom.

It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it itself will endure forever. And inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and Jesus Christ, if you remember, I want you to turn to a verse, you keep a finger here in Matthew chapter 21 and verse 42, Matthew 21, 42, Jesus said concerning himself, Jesus called himself a stone. I don't know whether you know that.

There are many titles for Jesus Christ in the New Testament. One of the titles is a stone. Matthew 21, 42, did you never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone.

That stone was Jesus Christ himself rejected by the Jewish builders, but which God appointed as the cornerstone of his temple. And then verse 44, he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, that is the true disciple of Jesus Christ falls on this stone and is broken and humbled and God is able to empower him. But if you don't fall upon that stone and if you are not broken by God, then the other alternative is, the one on whom the stone falls, it will crush him to pieces and scatter him like dust.

So there are only two alternatives that we have in relation to the stone. One is to fall on it and to be broken. And the other is, I stand unbroken during my earthly life and the stone falls on me one day and crushes me to dust.

That's exactly what we see in Daniel chapter 2, that in this dream we read here, verse 34 of Daniel 2, that he saw a stone cut out without hands. Cut out without hands means it was a work of God. Jesus, the kingdom of Christ is not the work of man, not made with human hands.

And it struck the statue, not on the head, meaning that Jesus did not come in the days of Babylon, not on the chest. Where did it strike the statue? At the feet. The coming of Christ will be in the days of those ten kings headed up by the antichrist.

And it crushed them, the stone fell on the statue. And the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed and became like dust, chaff. The wind carried them away.

Exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 21. So we have the privilege of being broken. That's why brokenness is so important.

That's why we preach about brokenness in the church, about taking up the cross, because the only other alternative is to let the stone fall on us and be crushed. If we judge ourselves, that is if we are broken, then we will not be judged, the Bible says. Then the stone won't fall on our heads.

To paraphrase it, it means if we fall on the stone and are broken, then the stone won't fall on our heads in judgment. And so we see that all this is pictured here in Daniel chapter 2 about the kingdom of Christ. I just want to say here that Jesus Christ is the stone, but from that the whole temple is built.

So it's not just Christ, but it is Christ and his body, the church. And we see that in Revelation that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God comes along with 144,000 of the overcomers, the army of the Lamb and overcomes the Antichrist as we read in Revelation chapter 19. And so that's what we see here in verse 44.

And it says here in the last part of verse 45, the great God has made known to you, O King, what will take place in the future. So the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. Now Daniel was just a young man, around 20 years of age when he gave this interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar.

And I mentioned here in our first study that Ezekiel the prophet lived in Babylon at the same time as Daniel. He was older to Daniel. And I mentioned how Ezekiel mentions under the inspiration of God, three righteous men in the Old Testament, Noah, Job, and the third one was a living man called Daniel.

I want to show you another verse in Ezekiel 28 concerning Daniel which Ezekiel writes concerning Daniel's wisdom. Ezekiel 28 we know is a description of the fall of Satan. The fall of Satan is described in verses 12, 13, 14, 15 onwards up to verse 18 or so.

The fall of Lucifer. And there Lucifer is described as extremely clever. And the comparison is made in verse 3 with Daniel.

He says you are wiser than Daniel. There is no secret that is a match for you. And remember Ezekiel was writing this when Daniel was living in Babylon.

Such was that young man's reputation for wisdom that the only person whom the Holy Spirit could compare Satan with was Daniel. Remember not even Solomon. Not even Solomon.

Solomon fell away but Daniel didn't. And when the Lord tried to compare Satan he didn't say you're wiser than Solomon which is what you know the phrase in the world the proverb is wiser than Solomon but that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says wiser than Daniel because Daniel was upright till the end of his days and when we think that he was a young man it shows the tremendous possibilities for young people in the last days to be overcomers and to live and conduct their life in wisdom.

That's the great need brothers and sisters. Wisdom and God alone can give it. So many believers behave in such foolish ways in their relationships with other believers in their conduct with their relatives and in their office.

God can give us wisdom. Daniel had wisdom and that's what we need to seek God for if we are to live as overcomers in the last days. And so we see here God has shown you this he says O King give the glory to God.

Daniel doesn't say I have shown you this. He says God has shown it to you but Nebuchadnezzar is typical of the stupidity and the blindness of the heathen even though Daniel said in verse 45 God has shown you this Nebuchadnezzar falls down and worships Daniel. See that's the stupidity of heathenism.

They are taken up not with God but with miracle workers. Miracle workers are the objects of admiration of the heathen. Oh this supernatural thing that Daniel did and they fall down and worship him.

Now a person even if he calls himself a Christian who adores a miracle worker is a follower of Nebuchadnezzar. He doesn't know how to give the glory to God and there are a lot of Christians like that these days I'll tell you that who adore and follow miracle workers. That's a typical of Nebuchadnezzar and he he gave orders to present him an offering and um to have incense brought out before him but I'm sure Daniel never received that worship.

Daniel must have just walked away from there and then probably when the king saw that the king said all right it's your God who is the God of gods not you and the Lord of kings now he gives the glory to God. So I feel that something must have happened there between verse 46 and 47 that Daniel must have done as a man of God so that the glory would not come to him but go to God and I just want to mention this dear brothers and sisters that in all of our prophecy and in all of our ministry particularly a God-given ministry that blesses and helps others it's very easy for people to admire us they may not worship us and have incense before us but in other ways and the true man of God will pull away from that so that people's attention and adoration is directed towards God that our prophecy and our ministry brings glory to God so that people's attentions are turned to him and Daniel was always trying to point the attention to God who

gave that revelation to Nebuchadnezzar.

So then the king gives the glory to God finally in verse 47 your God he says is a God of gods and he's a revealer of mysteries since you've been able to reveal the mystery he finally gives the glory where it's due because Daniel refused to accept that worship but then it says the king promoted Daniel and Daniel accepted the promotion it's all right to accept promotion but not worship the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and the chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon here's a young man just in his early 20s appointed chief prefect over the whole province of Babylon think of that what wisdom even that heathen king saw in him and the way he conducted himself upright before God and that responsibility was

committed to him and Daniel accepted it for God's glory and notice what he did the very next thing he did a Sirach Meshach and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon while Daniel was at the king's court Daniel used his influence in his office to find good jobs for other wholehearted believers that's a good example to follow he used his influence in that government office to find good positions for other wholehearted believers he did not find jobs for the compromisers I just want you to note that he did not feel it was his responsibility to help all those fellows who call themselves his relatives and there were many of them among the Jews there Shadrach Meshach and Abednego were not his relatives he didn't find jobs for his relatives he found jobs for wholehearted

disciples of the Lord and I believe that was something very good even for the kingdom that you had God-fearing people who would not take a bribe incorruptible people up there in office I believe Daniel was bringing a blessing to Babylon by putting such people into office I just mentioned that in passing now we come to Daniel chapter 3 and I want you to see the connection here Daniel chapter 3 now in the book of nether after hearing all about this statue he himself was what the head of gold but you know what he did it says he made an image which is all gold all the way from head to foot and toes and everything it says in verse 1 what is the meaning of that nobody's going to take the kingdom from me no silver or bronze or anything is going to come after me it's just going to be gold all the

way through from head to foot he made an image of gold representing himself probably in his own likeness and it is a massive one says 90 feet high and nine feet broad 90 feet high a huge statue and he set it up on the plain of dura in the province of Babylon now here in the book of nether is a picture of the antichrist and when we studied revelation chapter 13 we saw in revelation 13 14 that the antichrist when he rules the world he's going to have a statue made by the false prophet a statue and so we see one significant thing that the times of the gentiles begins with a statue made by nebuchadnezzar in daniel chapter 3 and it ends with a statue made by the antichrist in revelation chapter 13 and verse 14 and so we see here idolatry the beginning and at the end of the times of the

gentiles and in nebuchadnezzar making this image completely of gold he was thinking that he could hinder god's plan god's plan was different nations coming and taking over at different stages but nebuchadnezzar thought he could hinder god's plan by having a kingdom that could continue on forever and we see here then nebuchadnezzar sent word to assemble all the satraps and these are all the various leaders of the various provinces the prefects the governors the counselors the treasures the judges the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that nebuchadnezzar the king had set up and then all these officers came they assembled for the dedication of the image that nebuchadnezzar the king had set up and they stood before the image that

nebuchadnezzar had set up then the herald loudly proclaimed to you the command is given oh peoples nations and men of every language that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn flute lyre trigon psaltery bagpipe and all kinds of music you are to fall down and worship the golden image that nebuchadnezzar the king had set up now i want you to notice here that in false religion there's always a great emphasis on music notice that this is false religion and it's very interesting to see politics and religion being mixed at the beginning of the times of the gentiles and when we studied revelation we saw it's mixed together at the end of the times of the gentiles here is religion fall down and worship this image and to stir people's emotions up so that they will forget about their reason

and forget what their intellects tell them this is a stupid thing to do they work up the emotions with various instruments horn and flute and lyre and trigon and psaltery and bagpipe and to work up people's emotions so that they can worship now is this found only in heathenism it's found in christianity too it is of the essence of babylon he who has years to hear can hear that a worship which is stimulated by the working up of the emotions with drums and various types of instruments is not spiritual worship we're not against instruments but if i can worship only with instruments there's something fundamentally wrong with my understanding of praise and worship nebuchadnezzar was the one who worked up people's emotions to get them to worship with such a lot of instruments where this huge

orchestra was playing all these instruments and people would fall down and worship when they got all excited so don't think when you feel greatly moved in a so-called church building by the organ or some instrument that it is the working of the holy spirit has got nothing to do with the holy spirit at all it's just the working up of your emotions and it's a great deception the mark of true spirituality is obedience to god not the working up of our emotions and we see here verse six uh nebuchadnezzar says whoever does not fall down in worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire therefore at that time and all the people heard the sound here's the working up of the emotions the horn and the flute and the lyre trigon and the psaltery and backpipe and all

kinds of music all their emotions got worked up all the men of every nation and every language fell down and worship the golden image that nebuchadnezzar the king had set up and that's another mark of false religion compulsory obedience you must bow down otherwise you'll be punished and you have to do it you have to do it jesus never taught that type religion a religion which tells you you must pay ten percent of your income to god i want to tell you that's not christianity just by the way whichever pastor may tell you that that's nebuchadnezzar you must do it otherwise you may not be thrown into the furnace but you'll get the frown of the pastor if you don't do it sometimes that can be as bad as a furnace for some some situations no this compulsory obedience to do this and do that is not

in christianity jesus said if any man will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me he told the rich young ruler when the rich young ruler wanted to love his money he said all right you can go he virtually said he could go he didn't force him didn't threaten him but false religion there is this compulsory threatening another mark of false religion now we see in verse 8 for this reason at that time certain chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the jews they responded and said to nebuchadnezzar the king oh king live forever you yourself oh king have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn flute lyre trigon sultry and backbite and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image and whoever does not fall down worship shall be cast

in the midst of a furnace of blazing fire but there are certain jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of babylon namely shadrach mishag and abednego and these other

chaldeans were jealous that these people had got into leadership over them and he said these men of king have disregarded you they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up and one can ask this question where was daniel at this time i think daniel was probably on a tour somewhere he was the prime minister of the empire and he was probably on tour at that time there in allowing daniel to be away at this particular time so that these three young brothers would stand on their own the first time daniel chapter one daniel was there to stand with them and to encourage

them to take a stand but now daniel chapter three god wanted them to be strong on their own that's how god deals with us he'll give us a brother to help us to take an uncompromising stand and then he'll put us in another situation where that brother is not there to encourage us so that we can take a stand on our own that's the way our spiritual muscles are going to develop and the spiritual muscles of shadrach mishag and abednego would never have developed if daniel was there at this time so it's wonderful to see the sovereignty of god in the way he plans our life and also i believe it was a test to see whether shadrach mishag and abednego would take a stand when daniel was not there when that elder brother is not around will you still take a stand for the lord in faithfulness when

nobody's there to watch you when you're in the midst of compromisers all around you and particularly if it's going to cost you your life and so we see here that there were only these three jews who refused to bow down the command of god and the law of moses was very clear that you shall not bow down to any idol but there were so many jews in babylon what about all these other people what did they do they forgot about god's law when it came to losing their life there are different types of christians jesus spoke in the story of the man who sowed the seed that there were some types of christians who received the word in the meeting with great joy and uh they they are the emotional type you know they get all excited praise the lord is frequently on their lips and their shoot up like the

plant that grows up quickly but there's no depth when some situation comes in their office or in some other situation where they have to take a stand for the lord there they compromise they wither away jesus said the sun shines on it in its strength and it withers away such were these other jews they said in psalm 137 verse 1 by the rivers of babylon there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered zion yeah it's easy to sing that the worldly folk have made a pop song out of that so i can imagine that these compromising jews would have made a pop song out of it even there by the rivers of babylon there we wept when we remembered zion but what about when it comes to bow down before this image oh yeah let's bow down but we weep when we remember zion oh it's so easy to get so emotional

about zion and jerusalem but the point is what do you do when it's a question of standing up for the truth and that's how it is with so many compromising christians sitting in dead denominations yeah they say that they have a great desire for zion and all that but they're bowing down compromising but not shadrach meshach and abed nego they didn't just believe in weeping when they remembered zion they also believed in obeying god it's not just enough to weep when you remember zion but to obey god and they refused to bow down to this idol and then it says here in verse 13 then nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring shadrach meshach and abed nego then these men were brought before the king and nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them is it true that you do not serve my gods

or worship the golden image i've set up now if you're ready he says i'm going to give you one more chance but if you don't worship verse 15 you're going to be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire and listen to this the last part of verse 15 what god is there who can deliver you out of my hand that's like saying your god may be able to tell you dreams which i saw but he can't save you from the fire don't forget

that yeah i don't forget that your god enabled daniel to know the dream i had but he's which god is there who can deliver you from the fire it's like pilot you know when he told jesus in john 19:10 don't you know that i have power to crucify you or to release you don't you know that you're in my hands and jesus stood there just like shadrach mishach and abednego before

nebuchadnezzar and he said calmly to pilot you can have no power against me unless it were given you from above the god of heaven if he gives you power to crucify me then only am i going to be crucified you don't have any power over me see that's the position of an overcomer he doesn't have any fear of a pilot or a caesar or a nebuchadnezzar or a flaming fiery furnace or anything and i just want you to see here their answer in verse 16 shadrach mishach and abednego answered and said to the king oh nebuchadnezzar we do not need to give you an answer concerning this or as the living bible says we're not worried what's going to happen to us they knew long before jesus said that they need not fear those who could only kill their body but fear him who can cast both soul and body into hell they

were more afraid of god and they knew what it said in the book of isaiah isaiah the prophet lived before shadrach mishach and abednego and these god-fearing jews had read isaiah and they knew isaiah 8:13 which says if you fear god you need fear nothing else no one else they knew that it wasn't just a verse they hung up on the wall in their houses it was deep in their lives they feared god and they would not bow down to the idol and therefore they had no fear of nebuchadnezzar this tyrant the world's greatest ruler at that time now notice this nebuchadnezzar did not say to them you must forsake your god and worship this no you can keep your god but also bow down to this just like they say you don't have to give up your christianity just contribute one rupee for the ayodhya puja you don't

have to give up your christianity just make a contribution it's the same thing you don't have to give up your faith and there are christians who say well after all it's not something serious maybe there were jews who said just nod your head a little bit after all we can always go back to god and repent and say i'm sorry lord for bowing i'm sorry lord for giving that one rupee to the ayodhya puja i can always repent you see this cheap attitude towards forgiveness is the reason why people some many people never come into a god-fearing life they treat the blood of christ like tap water i can sin i can compromise and i can always come back and say oh lord i'm sorry i compromised today knowing very well that next year at ayodhya puja time you're going to do exactly the same thing and go back

to the lord and again say lord i'm sorry i compromised these are not following in the footsteps of daniel and his three friends no sir far far from it they are compromisers of the first order they were like that in babylon too hundreds of jews who just bowed down forgot all about moses forgot all about the law of god just bowed down they just sang about weeping about zion that's all no but these people were not afraid they said we're not worried what's going to happen to us we're not afraid of death and they said in verse 17 if it be so if it is god's will our god whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and he will deliver us out of your hands o king but even if he does not let it be known to you o king that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the

golden image that you've set up they could not say for certainty whether god was going to deliver them or not neither can we but whether it is the will of god for us to be delivered or not delivered from the fire we're not going to bow down that makes no difference we know one thing that our god is well able to deliver us from this blazing fire that's no problem for god but we don't know whether it's his will but that makes no difference to us we're not going to bow down to your image that is the meaning of being uncompromising they loved not their lives even unto death that is the mark of an overcomer in revelation 12:11 they

overcame satan because they loved not their lives unto death if i love my life i will compromise and sin in the moment when the pressure becomes too much that's

what many people are doing and will do even more in the days to come god is preparing a people on the face of the earth today from these passages of scripture encouraging them and from many other passages of scripture particularly the example of jesus who resisted unto blood in striving against him whose attitude was i would rather die than commit sin i would rather die than displease the father in one small thing god is raising up a people like that who would rather have their eye plucked out than commit a sin with their eye who would rather have their right hand cut off than sign a false statement write a false account rather have their hand cut off leave alone lose their job if they're willing to have their hand rather than write a false account how many christians define like that who

would rather have their eye plucked out than lust with their eye even once god has got a few like that those are the uncompromising believers of the last days a remnant and i want to tell you they are not all people just sitting in one assembly it's quite possible there are people can come and sit here in christian fellowship center which got some sort of reputation and he may be an absolute compromiser sitting there trying to fool everybody but defeated in his inward life unfaithful in his private life a compromiser sure and he may be sitting here god will expose him one day sure so i'm not saying it's a question of where they sit it's a question of our inner attitude which god alone knows in the times where there is no daniel around no elder brother to watch us when we are alone god's

got a remnant like that who would rather please god whatever the price they have to pay and you see this is what infuriates the others the world and babylonian christianity is infuriated by this type of uncompromising stand sure it says in verse 19 nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath and his facial expression was altered i just want to mention something here in passing it's not in the context but i just want to say here that there are two stages in anger one is verse 13 where it's just rage and anger inside and the second stage is verse 19 where this wrath begins to change our facial expression and you and i know what that means it's amazing how a face can describe very often what's going on inside a person's thoughts and i just want to mention here something concerning victory over

anger victory over anger is not just a question of controlling our words that someone has provoked me in some way and somehow i managed to grit my teeth and i had no i didn't say anything angrily to him that's good but that's only stage one that's when we are under law we come that far but grace does something more it gets rid of the boiling inside and it's when there's boiling inside that there's a change in my facial expression even though i've controlled my words so victory over anger does not just mean victory over words but also victory over a change in the facial expression never forget that that facial expression change is due to an inward boiling and i must never rest in this matter of victory over anger until that in i have died inwardly in this area so that there are no angry

words there's no change in my facial expression and there's no boiling your bitterness inside then we have got victory and when we see our need here i controlled my words but there was boiling in my facial expression changed and instead of mourning i go and congratulate myself that i didn't speak angry words we're not overcomers we'll never be overcomers that's not the time to congratulate myself that i didn't lose my temper in words that's the time to go and mourn and say lord i didn't lose my temper with words that's true but this boiling inside and this change of facial expression i want thorough victory here and it's the one who mourns there who's going to go into the death of christ and come into true victory finally that's just in passing and so he answered by giving orders to heat

the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated and he commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up shadrach mishak and abednego in order to cast them in the furnace of blazing fire and they were tied up in their trousers and coats and caps and other clothes and were cast into the midst of the blazing fire furnace and because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was extremely hot the flame of the fire killed those men who had carried shadrach mishak and abednego to the furnace but the three men shadrach mishak and abednego fell into the furnace blazing fire still tied up then nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished and he stood up because he looked inside after a little while i think and he said didn't we cast three men into the fire he said yeah

certainly okay and he said see i see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the without harm and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods that was jesus christ before he was born in bethlehem he came in a visible form to shadrach mishak and abednego inside the fire because they stood for god in the palace god stood with them in the furnace and that's always true if you stand for god before the compromisers god will stand with you when you're in the furnace it's always true them that honor me i will honor sure that's always true it's always been true in every generation it's true in these days and the overcomers are those who know that that if i stand for god he will stand with me when i'm in the furnace whatever that furnace may be if i stand without compromise

god's not going to forsake me when i suffer because of that compromise impossible he will honor those who honor him we don't have to feel sorry for ourselves and wallow in self-pity when we suffer because we take an uncompromising stand brothers and sisters let me tell you if you take an uncompromising stand for the lord and because of that you suffer let me give you a little bit of advice two things don't go around seeking sympathy from others for the suffering that you're enduring because of your uncompromising stance second don't seek honor from people because of your suffering no keep quiet about it take it before god and say lord this is not something to wallow in self-pity for in this is a tremendous privilege that you give me to be thrown into the fire because i'm uncompromising

hallelujah honor him and he'll honor you and then you'll be a testimony to the heathen in the fire you can glorify god in the fires and it says here he saw four people walking around we've seen in the book of daniel one of the great themes of the book of daniel is the sovereignty of god we saw in chapter one his sovereignty over our physical bodies how daniel and his friends even though they ate ordinary food god's sovereignty kept them healthy and strong more than all these people who ate fancy food we saw in daniel chapter two in the statue god's sovereignty over all the governments of the world and in daniel chapter three we see god's sovereignty over fire and over the elements of nature that's another thing which brings fear to many people water drowning being burned in the fire the

elements of nature god is sovereign over them and the book of daniel describes the sovereignty of god over all areas of life over my physical health over the governments of the world over the elements of nature including fire nothing too hard for god the only thing that the fire did to shadrach and meshach and abednego was what it burnt the ropes that tied their hands praise god that's all the fire will do for us as well if we stand true to him that when somebody throws us into the fire it's just going to burn the bonds that satan has put on us that's why god allows trials and difficulties as well to burn the ropes which satan has tied on us so that we can be loosed and it says they came out then nebuchadnezzar came to the door of the furnace and he said come out you servants the most

high god come here and they came out and all these great leaders government leaders gathered round and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on their bodies not a hair of their heads was

seen you know jesus said the hairs on your head are numbered and the hairs on the head of shadrach meshach and abednego was certainly numbered and god made sure that not one of those hairs was lost inside that fire this is the god we follow this is the god we seek to honor who has counted the hairs on our head and will make sure that not one of them is burnt or lost without his permission it's wonderful to be a servant of this god it's wonderful to be an uncompromising disciple of jesus christ the best possible thing you can do on this earth and it says here when they saw that that their

trousers were not damaged there was not even a smell of fire on them but their ropes had burned how is that see god's very selective he uses the fire to get rid of the things that are a nuisance in our life and the things which we need like our hair and our clothes and all he keeps on and if only we can see this that any fire that devil may ever try to put you or me into if we stand true to god the only effect that that trial or that fire or that persecution or that opposition or that whatever you may call it will do is to burn away the bonds burn away the ropes everything that we need from our hair down to our feet will remain untouched when you walk through the fire they knew what isiah said when you walk through the fire it won't hurt you isiah 43 that was god's promise and was

fulfilled here and then we read here in the book of nether responded and said blessed be god of shadrach meshach and abednego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who put their trust in him he realized that these people overcame the power of fire by faith there's a wonderful verse in 1 john 5 4 which says this is the victory that overcomes the world even power what faith now can you give me a definition of faith well i want to give you a definition that's helped me a lot we read in hebrews 11 of course faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen but to express it in another way faith is the total leaning of the human personality in absolute confidence in god's sovereign power over circumstances and people in absolute confidence in god's perfect

love for us and in absolute confidence in god's infallible infallible means that which cannot make a mistake wisdom with which he plans our lives three things about god his sovereignty his love and his wisdom now let me say that again faith is the total leaning of the human personality total leaning of our personality on god in absolute confidence in his absolute sovereignty over circumstances and people in absolute confidence in his perfect love for me because i'm a child of god in absolute confidence in his infallible wisdom that plans out the details of my life that's faith in other words i say lord i can trust you completely your sovereignty extends over all the people who come into contact with me in my office in my neighborhood relatives landlord boss people who come to contact me

through my in circumstances daily god's sovereignty touches everything secondly lord i have don't have the slightest doubt that you love me perfectly your love for me could not be more than it is right now there's no need to ask god please love me a little more there's no need he cannot love me more than he's loving me right now i have faith in that and thirdly i have absolute confidence that the plan god's made for my life is the best i can't make it better than that his wisdom is perfect now if i have faith in that i can overcome the world this is the victory that overcomes the world even my faith that's how these people overcame and nebuchadnezzar recognized that they put their trust in god and violated the king's commands they disobeyed the greatest earthly authority because they

wanted to obey god and yielded up their bodies they did not love their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own god and so we see here these babylonians you know tradition and history tell us that they used to worship the fire it's from babylon the religion of zoroaster the parsi religion has come the worship of fire began with the worship of the sun the worship of fire and here was a demonstration to

nebuchadnezzar that there was a god who was superior to this fire that was quite a humiliating thing and then nebuchadnezzar says in verse 29 therefore i make a decree that any people nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the god of shadrach mishak and abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap in as much as there

is no other god who's able to deliver in this way would you have been happy if you were in shadrach mishak in abednego's place when you heard nebuchadnezzar give such an order if anybody dares to say anything against the god of shadrach mishak and abednego will tear you limb to limb and reduce your houses to a rubble heap see this is the mark of heathenism compulsory first he was compulsory the other way now he's compulsory this way all right now you jolly well follow this god now don't you dare speak a word against him it's equally wrong to force people to become christians it's just as wrong as forcing them to bow down to an idol sure and that's what we see in a lot of european countries that the church has become a part of the state the church is ruled by the government of the state

and you hear of the state church well here was the origin of that the origin of the state church is here nebuchadnezzar constantine 300 years after christ brought christianity to be the state religion of rome and that was the doom of pure christianity we don't need the support of any nebuchadnezzar or any constantine in order to propagate the faith i'll tell you that and don't be happy when some nebuchadnezzar puts the might of his government behind your religion that's not going to be a help and we are not excited if the prime minister invites us for breakfast or the governor invites us for lunch because we are some christian dignitary that's a lot of garbage we're not interested in that type of thing we're not interested in the political support of people for our religion i'll tell you

that it's very important don't get excited when some political leader or some film star gets converted or some astronaut gets converted we get all excited about it the point is is he a disciple that's far more important is he full to the holy spirit we don't need any of this earthly fame to propagate our faith and the king caused shadrach mishag and abednego to prosper in the province of babylon shadrach mishag and abednego didn't want to support the king neither before they went into the fire nor inside the fire nor after they came out and blessed are the people who walk like that overcomers who are not disturbed when great rulers oppose them and who don't get excited when great leaders support them both are dangerous i'll tell you that and suppose sometimes the support of great leaders

can be more dangerous than the opposition of those leaders persecution purifies the church much more than the support of the government i'll tell you that sure it's always been true so we learned some tremendous lessons from here from daniel chapter 3 concerning how we are to stand for the lord in these last days in which god has given us the tremendous privilege to live and to stand as part of that overcoming remnant true to him this was at the beginning of the times of the gentiles we are at the other end at the end the feet end of the times of the gentiles and god is looking at this time for people like shadrach mishag and abednego and that's why he has opened up the book of daniel in these last days it was concealed until the last days but it's opened up now because he needs

overcomers in every country to stand for the lord

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