

Daniel 3-4

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the faithfulness of God in delivering Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, emphasizing the importance of unwavering faith amidst trials.

Duration: 51:37

Scripture: Matthew 24:15

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "End Times Prophecy"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the image of gold, highlighting the faithfulness of God and the consequences of pride and defiance. It draws parallels to future events like the rise of the Antichrist and emphasizes the importance of standing firm in faith and truth amidst apostasy and deception.

Transcript

Well, let's turn in our Bibles to the book of Daniel. We've been having an exciting time in Daniel. It is an extremely exciting book and one of my favorite books in the Bible.

And I grew up in the book of Daniel and the stories of God's watching over Daniel and his friends there in the Babylonian capital and how that the Lord just really used these young fellows and these adverse circumstances in which they found themselves, but how that the Lord was faithful to them. And so dealing again with the faithfulness of God and the commitment of these young men to the Lord as we get into Daniel chapter three. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold whose height was three score cubits.

A cubit is about 18 inches, usually the distance between your elbow and your fingers. And without the uh, rulers, they used to use the, uh, the span, the distance between your thumb and your little fingers stretched out and a cubit, uh, the length between your elbow and the tips of your fingers. And that's what they use to measure.

And so, uh, at, uh, three score cubits would be about 90 feet high, huge idle. And, uh, it was nine feet wide and it was set up in the plain of Dura there in the province of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, the captains, the treasures, the counselors, the sheriffs, the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of this image, which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Now in our last lesson, uh, when, uh, Daniel interpreted, uh, the troubling dream that Nebuchadnezzar had that he couldn't remember. And, uh, Daniel, uh, sought the Lord and God showed him the dream. And in this dream, he saw this image.

It had a head of gold, but it had a chest of silver. It had a stomach of brass. It had legs of iron.

It had feet of iron and clay with 10 toes. And as he looked at this image of the kingdoms that would rule over the world, according to the interpretation of the dream, he saw this rock that came out, not cut with hands. It smoked the image in its feet.

The image crumbled and the rock became a, a mountain that covered the earth. And so in the understanding of the dream that Daniel said, God has shown to you those kingdoms that will rule over the earth beginning with you. You are the head of gold, but your kingdom is going to be replaced by the Medo-Persian kingdom, which is the chest of silver that will be replaced by the Grecian kingdom, which is the stomach of brass that will be replaced by the iron kingdom, which we know from history was the Roman empire.

And thus the last kingdom would be related somehow to the Roman empire. That is, it would be out of, uh, Western Europe and it will be the final world dominating empire. Uh, and during the time of these 10 Kings, uh, will the Lord of heaven come and establish his kingdom that shall last forever.

So, uh, in the interpretation of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar now orders this idol or this image made of gold from top to bottom, uh, not just the head of gold, but all gold. And it is really in defiance to the interpretation that Daniel had given him of his dream. It is saying the Babylonian kingdom is going to last forever.

Uh, it will not be replaced by the Medo-Persian empire, but it will last forever. And it was really a defiant kind of thing on the part of that, uh, part of Nebuchadnezzar to make this image, uh, of all gold. But then he goes ahead and demands that everybody bow down and worship this image that he makes there and sets up in the plain of Dura there in Babylon.

And so they all gathered together and, uh, the, uh, uh, Harold, we read in verse four, cried aloud to you. It is commanded. Oh, people, nations, and languages that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sack, but the psaltery, the dulcimer, and all kinds of music that you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king has set up and incentive who, so does not fall down and worship.

The same hour will be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. So that's the incentive for falling down and worshiping this image. Pretty strong incentive.

I'd say therefore, at that time, when all of the people heard the sound of the cornet and these instruments, the music, uh, that, uh, he had set up, uh, Nebuchadnezzar, the king had set up, uh, at this time, there were certain of the, uh, Chaldeans of Babylonians that came near and they were accusing the Jews. It said, uh, they spake and said to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. Thou O king has made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the music, uh, that he would fall down and worship the golden image and whoever would not fall down and worship that he would be cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace.

Now there are certain Jews, uh, that, uh, are among us, uh, whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Uh, we know from earlier chapters that, uh, because of, uh, Daniel, uh, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his friends were promoted to positions of governors over the provinces of Babylon. This, of course, caused a great jealousy among many of the people in Babylon that these Jews would be elevated to these positions.

And so it was probably out of jealousy that they come to Nebuchadnezzar and report that these Jews, when the music sounded, they did not bow down before this image that you made and, uh, they didn't worship it. And so, uh, Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to him. And so they brought the men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar verse 14 spoke and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not you serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if you are ready that at time you hear the sound of the music and you fall down in worship, then good, uh, you, uh, you're doing well. But if you don't worship, then you will be cast in the same hour into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. And the question, who is that God which will deliver you out of my hands? So Nebuchadnezzar is sort of saying, look, guys, uh, maybe you didn't understand.

I'm going to give you another chance. I'm going to have the music sound again and give you an opportunity to bow down in worship. And if you do bow down in worship, then fine, you're off the hook.

But if you don't, uh, then I'll have you put in the burning, fiery furnace. So, and the question, who is the God that can deliver you out of my hands? So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we're not careful to answer you in this matter. Uh, we're not choosing our words carefully.

Uh, we're not trying to, uh, you know, be deceptive or, uh, duplicity in an, in an answer to you. We're going to just tell you straight out. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, who is the God that can deliver you, our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace.

And he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. In other words, uh, the God that we serve, he's big enough and he's able to deliver us out of your burning, fiery furnace. And he will deliver us out of your hand.

We don't know what he's going to do. And always, uh, and many times in our own lives, uh, we don't know just how God is going to respond to our need. We know that he is a God of miracles.

He could work a miracle or he can work in other ways. Uh, but what we do know, he's going to work and he's going to deliver us out of your hand. Maybe we will be consumed in the fire, but at least we're out of your reach.

You can't do any more to us than that. So, but if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image, which you have set up. So that you can know for sure.

We don't know what the destiny will be. We don't know what God might do. He can preserve us.

Uh, and, uh, he can, uh, preserve us out of your fire or he can, uh, actually, uh, deliver us out of your hand that we know, but just how we're not certain, but what we do know, we're not going to bow down and worship your image. So Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Therefore he spoke and commanded that they should eat the furnace

seven times more than it was want to be heated.

And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. And then these men were bound in their coats and their hosen, their hats and other garments. And they were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent and the furnace was exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, fell down in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished.

He rose up in haste. He said unto his counselors, did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? And they answered and said to the king, true, O king. And he answered and said, lo, I see four men.

They are loose. They are walking in the midst of the fire. They have no hurt.

And the form of the fourth is like the son of God. So here God is working a miracle. They were cast bound.

They tied them up and threw them into this burning fiery furnace. The only thing that burned were those ropes that they used to bind them with. They burned off and these three fellows were walking around in the midst of the fire that consumed the men that threw them in.

But there was the fourth man in there with them. A beautiful picture. How that when they were going through the fire that the Lord came and joined them in the midst of that trial, was with them in the fire that they were in and joined them there in the fire.

The Lord doesn't promise that he's going to always deliver us from problems, from trials, from tough situations. But he's promised to be with us through them. And so often as we are going through difficult situations, we find the presence of the Lord with us.

And he is there to deliver us and to set us free from the bonds that might be holding us back. But that's the only thing that can burn are those things that are binding you or holding you from doing his will. And it's a glorious thing when God burns from us those things that bind our lives.

There are many people who are bound by habits. They're bound by things that they just cannot seem to get victory over. And they are defeated in their walk with the Lord because of these things that are just binding them and they can't seem to get free.

But it's glorious when God does burn those bonds that are holding us and we are set free to serve our Lord. And so that's what happened to these three Hebrew boys. God burned the bonds that were holding them and now they are walking in the midst of that fire.

And when it is reported to Nebuchadnezzar that they are alive and walking in the midst of the fire, he said, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire. They have no hurt. And the fourth is the form of the Son of God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace. He spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth out of the midst of the fire.

And the princes and the governors and the captains, the king's counselors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was there a hair of their head singed. Neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire even passed upon them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him and have changed the king's word and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God.

Therefore, I make a decree that every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut in pieces. Their houses will be made a dunghill because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

So, it's an interesting story of God's deliverance and how God did deliver them because they put their faith and their trust in God because they refused to bow. And sort of the idea was if we bow, we will burn. If we don't bow, we can't burn.

And so, they didn't bow and they couldn't burn them. They survived this burning, fiery furnace. So, it's an interesting story of God's deliverance, honoring their faith because they trusted in God that he would deliver them from this burning, fiery furnace.

So, as we get into chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar, he's great at making proclamations. He just made this one proclamation, I decree every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their houses be made a dunghill and there's no other God that can deliver like their God.

So, Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all of the people, nations, and languages that dwell in the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and the wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion is from generation to generation. From this fourth chapter and the story of the fourth chapter and this proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar, there are many who believe that Nebuchadnezzar had what we would call a conversion experience. That he actually was converted and believed in the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And they believe that in heaven we'll probably be seeing Nebuchadnezzar, this once great monarch who ruled over the world. Don't know, but it would be interesting. I'd like to meet the guy and, you know, just to ask him a few questions about, you know, the positions and all that he had.

So I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, flourishing in my palace. And I saw a dream which made me afraid. And the thoughts in my bed and the visions of my head, they troubled me.

Therefore I made a decree that to bring in all of the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of this dream. And so they came in, the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers. And I told the dream before them, but they did not make known to me the interpretation thereof.

But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And before him, I told the dream saying, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubles thee, tell

me the visions of my dream that I have seen and the interpretation thereof. And thus were my visions and my head in my bed.

I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong, and the height reached to the heavens and the sight thereof to the end of the earth. The leaves thereof were fair.

The fruit was much, and in it was meat for all. The beasts of the field had their shadow under it. The fowls of the heaven dwelled in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher, the holy one, came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and he said thus, Hew down or cut down the tree, cut off its branches, shake off the leaves, scatter the fruit, let the beasts get away from under it and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of the roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field.

Let it be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beast in the grass of the field, and let his heart be changed from a man's, and let the beast's heart be given unto him, and let it be seven times passed over him. And this matter is by the decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of man and gives it to whomsoever he will and sets over it the basis of man.

So this dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now Belteshazzar, declare to me the interpretation thereof, for as much as all of the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour.

His thoughts troubled him. The king spoke and said, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream or the interpretation trouble you. And Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, the dream is for those that hate thee and the interpretation thereof to your enemies.

The tree that you saw, which grew and was strong, whose height reached to heaven, whose sight thereof to all the earth, whose leaves were fair and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all, and under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation. It is you, O king, that are grown and you become strong, for your greatness is grown and it reaches unto heaven and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw the watcher and the holy one coming down from heaven and saying, cut down the tree, destroy it, and leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field, let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let the portion be to the beast of the field till seven times pass over him.

This is the interpretation, O king. This is the decree of the most high which come upon my lord the king, that they shall drive thee from men. Your dwelling will be with the beast of the field.

They shall make you to eat grass like an ox, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times will pass over thee till you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, that after that you shall have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee.

Break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. And it may be that there will be a lengthening of your tranquility. And so all of this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

So at the end of 12 months, as he walked in the palace in the kingdom of Babylon, and of course we know that Babylon was an extremely beautiful city. One of the ancient wonders, or one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, were the hanging gardens of Babylon. And he evidently had a real taste for beauty, and Babylon was an extremely beautiful city.

It was a huge city, it actually encompassed an area of 60 square miles. The walls were 300 feet high, and 20 feet thick, and the walls were considered impenetrable by their enemies. And it was thought that Babylon was impossible to conquer.

And he is walking now a year later in the midst of the beauty of Babylon, probably in these hanging gardens, and he is sort of boasting, is not this the great Babylon he said that I have built? And when he made this boast, while the word was in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men. Your dwelling place will be with the beast of the field. They will make you eat grass as oxen.

Seven times will pass over thee, until you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men, and he gives it to whomsoever he will. And the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and he did eat grass as oxen. The body was wet with the dew from heaven, till his hair was drawn like an eagle's feathers, his nails were like bird's claws, and at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes into heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most high, and I praised and honored him that lives forever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion.

His kingdom is from generation to generation. So here is this proud king Nebuchadnezzar, and he has this weird dream that he cannot understand. He sees this huge tree that grows up there, and the, you know, it gives shelter or shade to many who are under it.

The birds are in the branches, and it's an interesting thing, and it's filled with fruit, and everyone is sort of nourished by this tree. And he then sees the tree is cut down, and it lies, you know, sort of, the stump is left, but the tree is cut down. And as Daniel is explaining the meaning of the dream, you, Nebuchadnezzar, are this tree.

You have a great kingdom, and there are many people that are dependent upon you. They're depending upon you for their sustenance and all, and yet, you know, you became lifted up with pride, and thus God allowed you to go insane for a period of time. Now, for a seven seasons, whether or not that is seven years or seven seasons, and in the Babylonians, they considered there were two seasons in the year.

There was summer season, and the winter season, and thus, it would be a period of three and a half years, or if it is a whole year, it would be seven years. He went insane. He lived like an animal among the animals, ate grass out in the field, and he was a madman.

He just was totally insane for this period of time, until he came to the realization that it is God who sets up those who are ruling on the earth, and he brings down those that are ruling upon the earth. God is in control, and that's the lesson that he's to learn, that God is the one who controls over the things in the earth, lifts up those whom he will, and brings down those whom he wills, and so until these seven seasons

are passed over, and then God restores his sanity to him, and he is again acknowledged as the ruler over Babylon, and he is restored to his position of power. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.

He does according to his will in the army of heaven. Among the inhabitants of the earth, none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou? Have you ever said, well, why did God do that? You ever been guilty of that kind of a question or accusation? I wonder why God did that, you know, and so often it is sort of, you know, if I were God, I wouldn't have done that. I would have, you know, done something that would have been smarter than that, you know.

I can't understand why God would do that, but that is, you know, sort of the position that Nebuchadnezzar was in. Watch that kind of an attitude, because God just might let you go insane for a while and eat grass like an ox, and so he learned his lesson of challenging the work of God or why God did certain things. Why do you do that? What doest thou? A question you shouldn't ask, because God has good reasons to do what he does, and the Bible says his ways are not our ways.

His ways are beyond our finding out, and so many times we are challenging God, and we wonder why God does the things that he does, and sometimes even challenge in sort of a negative way, but yet if we wait long enough, then we can see why God did the things that he did, and we see the wisdom of God, and we have to come and eat humble pie and say, Lord, you know, I'm sorry. I can see now why you did those things, and you realize that his ways are much better than our ways. So at the same time, Nebuchadnezzar said, my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor, and my brightness returned to me.

My counselors and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride, he is able to obese. He's talking about himself walking in pride, but now abased by this period of insanity and all, and acknowledging that God is the one that does rule.

So this interesting story of Nebuchadnezzar. Now it is interesting that at this point, we sort of leave Nebuchadnezzar, and the rest of the book of Daniel is the history of Babylon after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and the reign of Belshazzar, his grandson, and then it even goes on into the reign of the Persian kings, Cyrus and Darius, the Persian kings, but it's an interesting story as we move on in the book of Daniel. But there are some things that I want to cover while we are here that sort of deal with this story that we have been looking at, because as we are there in chapter three, and we see this great image that is made, and the people are demanded to worship this image.

This is, with the Bible stories, many times there's the story itself, but the story is related to something other than just the story itself. In other words, it's sort of a parable almost, and you're dealing with other issues. And this great image that was set up, and people were demanded to worship this image that was set up by Nebuchadnezzar, it's sort of a precursor of a future event that has not yet happened, and that is the Antichrist, when he comes on the earth, he's going to make an image of himself, and he's going to demand that people worship this image.

So, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul writes about this man of sin, this Antichrist, who is going to come, and the image and all that he sets up there in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Paul said, Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, not to be soon shaken in your mind or troubled, neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter, as from us, as though the day

of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there is a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition, that is the Antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, and remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things, and now you know that that which is withholding, that it might be revealed, that he might be revealed in his time, for the mystery of iniquity is already at work, only he who now is hindering will hinder until he is taken out of the way, and then shall the wicked be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and for this cause God will give them a strong delusion, that they will believe a lie, that they might be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." So, Paul is telling us about the future Antichrist that is going to be revealed, and how that he is going to actually impose and exalt himself above all that is called God, even as Nebuchadnezzar was exalting himself. In Matthew chapter 24, beginning with verse 15, Jesus is speaking of this Antichrist that is going to come on the scene, and we'll take a look at Matthew 24, beginning with verse 15.

When you, therefore, see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, when you see it standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, let them which are in the housetop not come down to take anything out of the house, neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. Woe to those that are with child and to those that are nursing in those days, but pray that your flight will be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, for there will be great tribulation such as not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be, and except those days should be shortened, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.

And so, he's talking about this abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel, the prophet. So, going back to Daniel chapter 9, to pick up on this idea of the abomination of desolation, 9, 27, Daniel speaks about the seven-year period that is going to yet come, that was determined upon the nation of Israel, and there in chapter 9, verse 27, he will confirm the covenant with many for one week. In the midst of the week, he will cause the sacrifice and the oblations to cease for the overspreading of the abominations.

He will make it desolate even to the consummation, and that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolate. When the Antichrist comes into power, he is going to make a covenant with the nation of Israel, and in this covenant with the nation of Israel, he will grant to them the right to rebuild their temple there in Jerusalem. And at that point, many of the Jews will believe that he is the Messiah, and they will acclaim him as the Messiah.

I was talking with some of the Jewish religious men, and I said, you know, you reject Jesus as the Messiah, why do you reject Jesus as your Messiah? And they said, because he claimed to be the Son of God. When the Messiah comes, he will be a man. As Moses was a man, so the Messiah will be a man.

Either shall arise a man like unto Moses, and to him shall you give heed. And so I said, if he is a man, then how will you know that he is Messiah? And they said, because he will lead us in the rebuilding of our temple. And I said to them, you don't know how ready you are to be deceived, because that's exactly what's going to happen.

A man's going to arise, and he's going to appear friendly to you. He's going to grant you the rights to rebuild your temple, but after the temple has been rebuilt, and you start again the worshiping and the sacrifices within the temple, he's going to come to that temple. He's going to stand in the holy of holies of that new temple that you build, and he's going to claim that he is God.

He's going to demand that you worship him as God. This is what the scripture tells us about this man of sin that's coming along the trail, or the path in time to come. And so it is one of the things that they are really ready for this man of sin, ready to hail him as their savior.

In Revelation chapter 13, beginning with verse 11, we have a little more information. And I saw another beast, this is the antichrist, coming up out of the earth. He had two horns, and like a lamb he spoke, like two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.

And he exercised all of the power of the first beast before him. He causes the earth and those that dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

He deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of these miracles which he has the power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast. And he had a wound by a sword and he did live. And he had power to give life to the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Just like Nebuchadnezzar made this great image and then ordered everyone at the sound of music to bow down and worship it. And whoever would not worship would be cast into this burning fiery furnace. So this is a replica of that.

And they cause this image to be made of the beast. And if you refuse to worship it would be killed. He causes both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond and free to make it take a mark in the right hand or in their foreheads.

No man might buy or sell unless he has this mark and the name of the beast and the number of his name. Here's wisdom and he that understands that him count the number for the number is 666. So he tells us that there in Revelation 14, 9 and 10, he that leads into captivity will go into captivity.

He that kills with a sword must be killed with a sword. Here's the patience and the faith of the saints. I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth and talking about this beast.

So it's an interesting thing that today there is such apostasy even within the churches. A survey was made of 1,500 ministers from 24 denominations across the United States, sort of across the board. And they were given these questionnaires to answer and there were some 600 and all that responded to the questionnaires.

In responding, 36% of the ministers in the United States, and this was a few years back, it's increased since then, 36 did not believe that God was omnipotent. 91% of the ministers were not sure that there was a personal devil. 75% did not believe in the virgin birth.

71% were not sure that Jesus died for our sins. 58% did not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And 82% did not believe that the New Testament was God's complete and final revelation to man.

And when you find that these are the kind of men that are filling the pulpits across the United States, you don't wonder why the church has lost its witness and why people are deserting the church because, you know, they've taken out the power, they've taken out the authority of the church. And thus you have a weak, anemic church that doesn't really have the kind of power that we need today to withstand the attacks against the church. And so it's sort of sad when we look at the way things are going, but yet when we look at the Bible and we know how it's going to end, then we take courage because we know that the final chapter is not yet written, will be written.

And in the final chapter, the Lord does come out victorious over all. And we, his church, the triumphant church of Christ, just will be ruling and reigning with him in his kingdom of light and life and hope. Father, we thank you for the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

And Lord, we thank you that you've given us in advance the insights to things that are going to be happening in the last days. And Lord, as we look around and we see these things that you've foretold happening in our world in which we live, we know, Lord, that we don't have much time left. And Lord, we rejoice in that hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who, when he comes, he's going to change our vile bodies, that they might be fashioned just like his own glorious image, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

And so, Lord, we pray that you'll help us as your church, that we might bear a true witness of you to the world in which we live. And may we stand firm, Lord, in our convictions and in our holding on to the truth of the scriptures. May we not, Lord, make compromises with the truth, but Lord, may we hold fast to that which you have declared.

And Lord, what an exciting time it is to see these passages of scripture coming to pass before our very eyes as we look at the world in which we live. And we see, Lord, how ripe it is for this man of sin to arise and to deceive the world and to cause the world to follow after him. And then, Lord, to reveal his true source of power, not from you, but Lord, from the powers of darkness.

But Lord, we pray that you'll help us, that we might stand true to you and to your revelation to us through the scriptures. May we study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. So, Lord, as we continue our journey through Daniel, we pray, Father, that, again, the Holy Spirit might just minister the truths unto our hearts, that we might grow and be strong, Lord.

And we will be really not taken by surprise with the things that are happening in our world. But, Lord, having had the revelation that you have given, knowing in advance what was going to be, Lord, that we will be prepared. And, Lord, that we'll be serving you with a heart that is filled with love and sincerity.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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