

(Daniel: The Man God Uses #3) Manifestation of Christ

by Ed Miller

God is making himself known in history through men like Daniel, Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who surrender to Him and allow Christ to be manifest through them.

Duration: 1:09:32

Scripture: Daniel 1:8, Daniel 3:16, Hebrews 11:34

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Faithfulness Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Daniel and its significance in understanding how God makes himself known in human history. The speaker emphasizes that even the best of God's people were a mess, highlighting the importance of the story of Daniel and his companions. The sermon emphasizes that God does not show partiality and uses people like Daniel to make himself known. The speaker encourages the audience to read chapters 4 and 5 of Daniel to further understand the principle illustrated in the book.

Transcript

Daniel, tape 3, Manifestation of Christ We know that you are our portion and our inheritance, and it is beautiful to us. We pray that we might enter into all that we have in our Lord Jesus. We ask you to guide us tonight as we meditate together and look in the book of Daniel.

Help us, we pray, to see beyond the sacred page, into your heart. Thank you in advance for guiding us. Deliver us from that which is flesh and man.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, I'll ask you to open, please, to Daniel, chapter 3, if you would.

Very briefly, let me give just a little bit of review of where we've been and what we're looking at. Good evening, come on in. We're studying together in the book of Daniel, but we're not studying the book of Daniel.

We're studying Daniel the man. Now, let me give a couple of observations we made about the book as a whole, and you'll see why we have honed in on this theme and where we're going. In the book of Daniel, there are three things that the Holy Spirit seems to underscore.

Anybody who studies Daniel has to agree with these three things. Number one, Daniel is the revelation of what God is doing. All through the book of Daniel, God is doing something.

And you can see it at the beginning and at the end of almost every chapter. He's making himself known. Daniel is one of the greatest books on missions, on evangelism, on soul winning in the entire Bible.

And the reason that it's so exciting to study this is because it's in story form. It's in picture form. You see, you get the same truth in the New Testament, but it's in doctrinal form.

And sometimes that's a little long-haired and it takes a while to digest the doctrine. But when it's in stories, it's easier to handle. In the book of Daniel, God is making himself known.

The second thing is this, that Daniel is a book of history. Those who study Daniel say that it spans what's called the age of the Gentiles, beginning with God's people Israel and how they were taken by the Babylonians and then by the Medes and Persians and then by Greece and then by Rome. And someday there'll be a confederation of ten nations on the earth and then the Lord Jesus will come and set up his kingdom.

All of that's in Daniel. Nation after nation, king after king, history, history, history, history. And what that's saying is this, that God is doing something.

He's making himself known. And God always uses history as his platform, as his stage. Every time God makes himself known, he moves in history.

If it weren't for Daniel, you wouldn't really see as clearly that God is behind the scenes. God controls nations. God controls people, individuals.

And so in Daniel, God is doing something, making himself known. God's platform, his stage, is history. Your history, my history, our history, the history of the world.

God is behind the scenes. And then the third thing in the book of Daniel, and this is where we get our fame, how does God make himself known in history? And the answer is this, always, never an exception, always through men like Daniel, Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Always through men like that.

Now, when you come to the book of Daniel, the majority of God's people, Israel, they're in bondage. They're in captivity. They've sinned and God is chastening them.

They're in confusion. Babylon means confusion. Jerusalem means peace, city of peace.

God intended his people live in peace. But because they sinned, they didn't live in peace, they lived in confusion. And they went off to Babylon.

And it was God's plan that they would live in relationship with him. And so when the book opens, God looks at all of his people and he says they're a mess. They're in bondage.

And then he homes in on the best of God's people. And they were a mess too. Even those who had the most light and the most privilege and the most opportunity, they were also a mess.

And then the spotlight narrows to these four, Daniel, Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And then God stops there and he begins to tell their story. God is saying in effect, I'm going to make myself known.

I'm going to make myself known in history. But I will always use people like this. That's why these six chapters are so important.

That's why they're so rich. Because they describe the kind of a man, the kind of a woman, the kind of a people that God will use to make himself known in human history. I think all of us are familiar with Acts 10.34. Acts 10.34 says, and I'll read it from the New American Standard, it says, I most certainly understand God is not one to show partiality.

You have the King James and you probably remember it from that. God is not a respecter of persons. And of course what that means is this, that nobody has an advantage over anybody else.

We're all on level ground. God has no favorites. There's no such thing as the Savior's pet, like the teacher's pet.

We're all on level ground. But remember, that truth must be balanced by another Bible truth. And the other Bible truth is this, that God is certainly a respecter of persons.

It's not right to say God's not a respecter of persons. As far as salvation's concerned, he's not. As far as salvation's concerned, everybody is on level ground.

But when it comes to ministry, when it comes to service, when it comes to God's program of redemption and making himself known in history, being used as his instruments, then the Bible teaches that God is very picky. God is very selective. And he looks for men like Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego and Daniel.

So we've been homing in on these six chapters to see what these men were like, how they became so usable by the Lord. I suggested that the first six chapters are in God's ordained order. In other words, since we're having the picture now rather than the doctrine of the man God uses, God lays down a truth in chapter one.

The next truth is in chapter two, and it must follow chapter one. You can't experience the truth in chapter two until you've come through chapter one. And you can't experience the truth in chapter three until you've come through chapter two.

Just so you can't experience the truth in four and five until you've come through one, two, and three, and so on. The first six chapters of Daniel are in God's order. And there's a progress, and there's a development, and there's an unfolding.

And when you're all done, you have the complete picture. This is the complete mention in picture form of the instrument that God will use. Well, so far we've looked at two chapters.

Let me get those before your hearts again. Chapter one, what's the starting point? What's the beginning? How does it all begin? If God's ever going to use me like he used Daniel and his three friends, it must begin with Daniel 1.8. Daniel 1.8 says, Daniel made up his mind. And the literal there is, Daniel set his heart that he would not defile himself.

It's got to begin there. The starting point of any useful instrument in God's hand is the will. Choosing.

I must decide as Daniel decided, I just want to please the Lord. I want to live for his honor. I don't want to please myself.

I don't want to defile myself. I just want to honor God. That's where it begins.

With a determination. With a will. With a choosing.

Now, I have to keep saying this so you don't misunderstand. Notice what I didn't say. It does not begin by pleasing God.

It begins by wanting to please God. That's how chapter one begins. Not by pleasing God, but by choosing, saying, I desire to.

You see, we can't perform. We can't do it. Any more than Daniel can do it.

When you go through the book of Daniel, you're going to notice this is one of the greatest sections on miracles in the Old Testament. I mean the fiery furnace and the lion's den and the interpretation of those dreams. Why is it such a great chapter on miracles? It's a great chapter on miracles because God kept showing up.

God kept coming. That's why. When a man sets his heart, all I want to do is please God.

I don't have the power to do it. I can't perform, but I want to. I desire.

And when a person has that desire, God keeps showing up. And doing miracles. And enabling him.

The duty's ours, but the power's not ours. So the beginning is, we must choose. I want to.

Not saying I can't. I want to. And then God will do the rest.

And we don't want to reteach all we've looked at. If you didn't get those lessons, you're certainly welcome to the tape. But how thrilling.

When Daniel set his heart, I just want him pleased. Suddenly, he found his own happiness. His own satisfaction.

He wasn't trying to make history. He just embraced that which God holds in everlasting remembrance. And that's why we're studying him tonight.

Because God wrote his name in history. Not Daniel. In chapter 2, we saw what follows.

We looked at this last week. This is just a little review. Once you set your heart to please God.

Now again, story form, chapter 2. This vision of Nebuchadnezzar. He had this dream. A dream of the man, the stone, the wind, and the mountain.

Remember what all those mean? Because together it gives the principle. That great image that he saw with the gold and the silver and the brass and the iron and the iron and the clay. In the shape of a man.

Represented the kingdoms of this world. There's many ways to say it. And the Bible says it many ways.

The old man. The flesh. Self.

The world system. This world. Over against the kingdom of God.

The physical over against the spiritual. This system. Man's way of living.

Man's way of thinking. Man's methods and so on. So that great image of this world.

And there and there as he saw the vision, a little stone made without hands. The Lord Jesus. Came out of heaven and struck at the foundation.

The brutal foundation of that great image. Of course the message is clear. This world must go.

And this image must go. And this kingdom must go. And so the Lord Jesus comes and he strikes at the foundation.

Causing a tremendous mess. And everything begins to collapse. And then the vision went on.

A great wind came. And it took all the trash away. And just as the man is this world system.

And the stone is the Lord Jesus. The wind is the Holy Spirit of God. God breaks it down.

And the Spirit blows it away. And I'll tell you if God doesn't break it down. It's not broken down.

It's foolish to try to deal with this whole system. And try to bring it down yourself. And on the other side.

If the Holy Spirit doesn't blow it away. It's not gone. You can't quit your sin.

And you can't. You can suppress it. But it will just pop up some place else.

Jesus knocks it down. The Holy Spirit blows it away. And until that happens.

It's not dealt with. And then the Bible says that little stone began to grow. And it grew until that stone became a rock.

And the rock became a hill. And the hill became a mountain. And it filled the whole earth.

And of course the message is this. That once my heart is set to please God. I begin seeing Jesus in this book.

And I see the Lord Jesus come in. And with every revelation. He breaks down something in my life.

And blows it away. And builds up something new. And it's the replacing of kingdoms.

The changing of kingdoms. And He grows in my heart. We talk about growing in Christ.

And praise God we ought to grow in Christ. But here's the other side. Christ grows in you.

The more you see Him. The more He grows. And pretty soon He'll fill the whole landscape of your life.

That's what happens. When you decide someday. I just want to please Him.

All of a sudden your Bible becomes alive. And you start seeing Christ. And Christ begins to change you.

And transform you. And the old falls down. And then it's blown away.

And the new comes in. Until Christ fills your heart. That's chapter 2. Now what follows that? That's what we want to look at.

So I'm going to ask you to turn. To chapter 3 if you would. This is probably the most famous chapter in the entire book of Daniel.

And usually it's studied outside of its context. And even there it's a blessing. And studied with a great deal of benefit.

Now only eternity I think will finally reveal. How many have been in some kind of a furnace. And found help in Daniel chapter 3. Maybe the furnace of affliction.

Or trial. Or suffering. Or persecution.

Or hard times. Or whatever. And they've read this marvelous chapter.

And saw how Christ can walk with them. In the fire and so on. And just had tremendous blessing from it.

I don't know of any Sunday school class. That hasn't thrilled in this story. Almost all Sunday school children know Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

In fact their names live on in history. And they become the brunt of jokes. My shack, your shack and a bungalow and so on.

I remember when I was a student at Moody. There was a man that came to speak to us. Dr. S. M. Luttridge.

Wonderful conference speaker. And a colored man. I have to tell you that because of what he said.

S. M. Luttridge. And he would stand up and lean over and say. My name is S. M. Luttridge.

And I know you're thinking. What does the S. M. stand for? His name was Shadrach Meshach. I never met anybody named Shadrach Meshach.

That's S. M. Luttridge. And he said. Now he said this.

I didn't say. He said. People always ask me when I say my name is Shadrach Meshach.

They never believe me. He said I always have to bring my birth certificate with me to prove it. But they always ask me what happened to Abednego.

And this colored man leaned over. He said I had to get rid of that. Because people misunderstood me.

They thought I was saying Shadrach Meshach and a bad negro. So he said I got rid of Abednego. Anyway.

In fact this same man when he was at Southwestern Seminary. His house burned down. And they started calling him Shadrach Meshach.

Luttridge. But anyway. Everybody knows this story.

With the three men in the furnace. And as I said. Even out of its context.

It's a marvelous, marvelous story. That's why it's become flannel graph material. And Sunday school material.

And conference material. And songwriter material. I don't know if you've ever heard the Statler Brothers.

They've got a song out. They didn't bend. They didn't bow.

They didn't burn. And it's just the song of Daniel chapter 3. The reason I gave you that is an introduction. Because this chapter is so famous.

So well known. So rich. I am not going to pretend that I can give you anything new tonight.

I can't give you anything that hasn't been said. On these marvelous chapters. And so what I've prayed.

And I pray will continue to pray. That will happen. Is this.

Number one. That God will quicken our hearts to old truth. You see.

We don't always need something novel and something new. The truth is thrilling. Not because it's new.

But because it's true. And we can be thrilled. With old truth.

If God quickens us. If God makes us alive. It's the anointing.

That's going to make a difference. The anointing of the Lord. On his word.

And so. Since the anointing is what turns the water into wine. Since the anointing is that which makes it live.

Makes the dead bones live. Let's pray that God will anoint both my lips and your ears and so on. Secondly.

The only thing I want to do. That is often not done. Is I want to show you this in it's context.

Not just the story of chapter 3. But how does it fit after chapter 2. And why does it come before chapter 4. You see. I want to show it to you in it's context. It's beautiful even out of it's context.

But in it's context. It's tremendously instructive. And so I pray that God will help us.

Let me state it for you right away as a principle. And then try to illustrate it. Chapter 1. God is chosen.

My heart is set. I just want to praise him. When that happens.

Chapter 2. Christ is revealed. And I begin to see Christ as the little stone. Then what? I like to call this chapter.

Christ Manifest. It starts off with Christ chosen. Then Christ revealed.

Then Christ is manifest. Something in this chapter. Now remember what the book is about.

God is making himself known. In this case he is dealing with Nebuchadnezzar. Something happens in this chapter that turns Nebuchadnezzar's head.

The unsaved man. Something happens here that gets his attention. That stops him in his tracks.

God begins to deal in his heart. In the next chapter he finally responds unto salvation. And we will see that next time Lord willing.

But he needed chapter 3 to prepare him for chapter 4. This is the context. Now there are many ways to study it. And I will encourage you to study it.

Study it in terms of faith. Study it in terms of the boldness of these men. Study it in terms of their surrender.

Study it in terms of separation. Study it in terms of fellowship with God. Study it in terms of affliction and trials and troubles that you go through.

Study it in terms of liberty. And deliverance. And being set free and so on.

But don't miss this. The main point of this chapter is the manifestation of Christ. That's what this chapter is all about.

Somehow in this chapter Christ comes out. Christ shines forth. Nebuchadnezzar is looking.

God is dealing with Nebuchadnezzar. And for the first time to his eyes now Christ is going to become visible. You set your heart to please the Lord.

Then God begins to show you Christ in the scripture which transforms you. Breaks down the old and builds up the new. And then Christ is manifest through you.

That's God's order and it never changes. And that's always the same. So whatever details we study here we'll look at a few.

I don't want us to miss the big one. It's the manifestation of Christ. Now let me get several of the facts before our hearts.

And then we'll come back and pick it up. Now I assigned you a homework assignment. I promised you a pop quiz and all that.

That you should have read the chapter. I hope you did. And it's about 30 verses long.

Some of you haven't and I want you to stay after tonight. And erase the boards and clap the erasers and all the rest. If you would read these chapters in advance it would really help.

Because some of them are rather lengthy. Because many of the principles are in terms of the facts in this story. I think if we don't read it together.

I'll pull on your memory that you have read it or you know the story. I think even without reading it when I refer it to the verses it will hang together. So I'm taking a chance.

I'm not going to read it with us. If you haven't read it then afterwards maybe you want to read it. But if you're not familiar with the passage.

I'm going to ask you for this lesson. Trust me. Trust me on these details.

Then check me out. I mean don't trust me forever. You got to see if it's the word of God.

But trust me tonight. And then after read it if you haven't read it. And I think it will stay together.

I suggested in chapter 2. And I'll ask you to turn there for a moment. That that great image. With the golden head and the silver shoulders and the brass hips.

And the iron legs and the iron and clay toes and feet. Represented man. The kingdoms of this world.

It wasn't surprising for me to read. In chapter 3. About this image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar set up. When Daniel explained the image in chapter 2. I'm going to ask you to look at chapter 2. 37 and 38.

When Daniel explained this. He said to Nebuchadnezzar. You, O king, are the king of kings.

To whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom. The power, the strength, the glory. And wherever the sons of men dwell.

Or the beasts of the field or the birds of the sky. He's given them into your hand. Has caused you to rule over them all.

You are the head of gold. You are the head of gold. I don't think Nebuchadnezzar slept well after that.

You are the head. You are the head. You are the head of gold.

And after a while that got to him. And that's why we got chapter 3. And so Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold. You are the head of gold.

You see he got so proud. That he made this tremendous image of gold. And I think it just went to his head.

There's really no difference. In chapter 2 between the image that he made. And chapter 1 that great image which represented this world system.

The only difference is. Chapter 1 gives you the outside view. And chapter 2 gives you the inside view.

And what's the inside view? The inside view of this world system is this. I want to be exalted. In fact I want to be worshipped.

That's what this world system is. The pride, the arrogance of this man. That he wanted to be worshipped.

That world system must be replaced. By the Lord Jesus Christ. And his kingdom.

And he'll do it if you're saved. But Nebuchadnezzar is at this point. This is all he knows.

Now God's dealing with him. God's making himself man. He's going to use men like this.

But Nebuchadnezzar at this point. All he knows is this world, this world. And the only thing that matters in this world is ego.

Me. And he makes this tremendous image. Everybody bow down.

Now that sounds extreme. But that's really how we all feel. Except that he come out and said it.

That's the essence of this world system. I want to be worshipped. I want everybody to bow down to me.

And that's what Nebuchadnezzar did. And that's really how you get into this fairness thing. The thing that irritated him so much.

Was that there was some. That wouldn't respond. That wouldn't bow down.

They wouldn't be conformed to this world. To this system. Something had happened.

And they were not responding. This world. This flesh.

This self. Whatever you want to call it. That's what's consuming him.

And it's driving him crazy. That somebody's not conformed to that. The pride and the arrogance.

The essence of this system. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had lined up with the Lord. And had been struck by a stone.

And that old system was falling down. And a new one was building up. And so they took a stand against this system.

Boy, I tell you. That's abrasive. Took a stand against this world system.

And they were hated. You know what's so interesting here? The very men. That owed their lives to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the other chapter.

It was because of them. That they lived. Because they were about to get killed.

They owed them their lives. And now they hate them with a purple passion. Because they're standing up against this world system.

Now before I home in on the chief message. That is the manifestation of Christ. Let's look at several of the details in this chapter.

No one can read this chapter, I guess. And not be struck with two things. Their faith.

And their surrender. If you want a great chapter on faith and surrender. My, here it is.

The faith of these men and the surrender of these men. It's not only the commentator that has noticed the faith of these men. But God himself calls attention to it.

I'm going to quote Hebrews 11.34. And to drive it home, I'm going to quote it in several translations. Hebrews 11.34 refers to this chapter and these men. And here's the words.

It says, By faith they quenched the power of the fire. If you have the NIV. It says, By faith they quenched the fury of the flames.

If you have King James, it says they quenched the violence of fire. If you have the Phillips translation. It says they quenched the furious blaze of the fire.

If you have the RSV. It says they quenched the raging fire. Now I call attention to that because all of them are underscoring the same thing.

Good evening, we're in chapter 3 of Daniel. It's been pointed out that the faith these men had, according to Hebrews 11.34. Did not quench the fire. But it quenched the power of the fire.

That's not the same thing. It didn't quench the fire, it quenched the fury of the fire. The violence of the fire.

In other words, when they were dropped into the furnace, the fire didn't go out. They didn't put the fire out by faith. They put the power of the fire out by faith.

Now what does that mean? You see, whatever the fire pictures, and I won't debate on that. Some people say it's afflictions and it's trouble and it's persecution and hard times and all the rest. Whatever is pictured by that, these men were delivered not from the fire.

They went through that. But somehow it didn't hurt them. Somehow the power of the fire was gone.

Now what a graphic illustration you have. Look at verse 27 if you would. You want a picture of being delivered from the power of the fire, look at this.

Chapter 327, the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men. Nor was the hair of their head singed. Nor were their trousers damaged.

Nor had the smell of fire even come upon them. Boy, you want a picture of being delivered from the power of the fire. Look at that.

The whole ability of the furnace to hurt, to destroy, was removed. In a little while in another connection we'll see how they actually gained by the fire. They lost nothing.

They actually gained by that fire. Now there's no question that a spiritual principle of life is illustrated here. When I'm looking to the Lord Jesus, no matter what I go through, no, now watch this word, spiritual damage can come to me.

I didn't say no damage. No spiritual damage. Anything shakable might be shaken.

But nothing unshakable will ever be touched in the life of a Christian. No matter what, not even one hair of your spiritual head will be singed. You won't even have the smell of harm or of hurt upon you.

No matter how hot the furnace, the child of God cannot be spiritually damaged. Recently our children were in a play, in a musical, called It's Cool in the Furnace. And I don't know if you ever heard the tape on that, but it gets a little wild in some places.

But the whole point is, it's illustrating the grace of God. It's cool in the furnace. Let me say a few words about what it means, it's cool in the furnace.

And here's the first word. The first thing it means to say it's cool in the furnace is this. It's hot in the furnace.

See, that's not a contradiction. It's hot in the furnace. Don't think for a moment that the grace of God is going to make the furnace cool for you.

Chapter 3, verse 20. You tell me if this was a real fire. He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.

Verse 22. For this reason, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Those valiant warriors felt the fury of a very real fire.

They all died, the ones that threw them in. You know, I think about Job when he was going through his fire. In one place, he cried out in pain, and his comforters came to him.

His miserable comforters, as he calls them. And they ask him this question. If God is real, and you're trusting in God, how come you're crying? And he gave a wonderful answer in chapter 6, verse 12.

Chapter 6, verse 12 says, Is my strength the strength of stones, or my flesh bronze? What did he mean by that? He said, in effect, I'm crying because it hurts. That's why. If my flesh were stones, or bronze.

If my flesh were made out of brass, I wouldn't cry. But God, when he created me, somehow he put in nerves, and nerve endings, and neurons, and dendrites. And that's why I'm crying.

Do you realize it's not a sin to say ouch? And Job said ouch many times. The fact that it's cool in the furnace, does not contradict the fact that it's hot in the furnace. I suppose there were many Christians, in the recent storm in Charleston, and in other places where Hugo went.

And I'm sure many of them lost many things. And in a sense, they went through the furnace. And I do expect to see them on the TV, cheering their losses.

Whistling, oh here comes Hugo. There goes my house. That isn't cool in the furnace.

That's not what it's talking about. We're real. We're not made out of brass.

We're not like grandfather's picture that hangs over the fireplace, always smiling, even when the house burns down. We're real people. We're not some fugitives in a wax museum.

We're real people with real feelings. And we don't lose our humanity when we come to Jesus. We gain his divinity, that's another thing.

But we don't lose our humanity. But the Bible teaches, though the fire is not quenched, the violence of the fire is quenched by faith. The power of the fire.

Now, I think it will help us if we answer the question, when? When is the power of the fire quenched? Let me try to answer that question for you. Not right away. I want to build up to it.

And I want to point out a couple of facts here. I want you to listen to the confession that these men made before the king. Chapter 3, 16.

Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this. Now, that's pretty bold, you know. They're standing before the king, and they're ready to die.

And they said, we don't need to talk to you. You don't represent our world. You represent another world.

And that world's done for us. Under any obligation to answer you, or any king of clay of this system. Verse 17.

If it be so, our God whom we serve, he's able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire. What a tremendous view they had. Our God's able.

They knew God was able. In fact, they said in verse 17, and he will deliver us out of your hand. They didn't have assurance that they weren't going to die.

But even death is deliverance compared to sin. And that's what they were saying. We'd rather die than sin.

We're not going to dishonor God. He's going to deliver us either way. Whether we live or die, we're delivered.

And if we die and go to heaven, that's better than bowing down to this world's system. Chapter 3, verse 18. But even if he does not.

Oh, I love this verse. Even if he does not. Let it be known to you, O king, we're not going to serve your gods.

Or worship the golden image that you've set up. What beautiful faith. Now, I don't know if when you read this chapter, you've asked the question, where was Daniel? I think a lot of people ask that question.

Where's Daniel in this chapter? Did he bow down? He's not mentioned. Was he there and did he fail? Or was he off on some political assignment? The Bible doesn't tell us where he was, and I don't really know. The dispensationalists tell us that this is all a great picture.

And Daniel pictures the church. And those three picture the Jews. And they went through the tribulation.

Daniel wasn't there because he was raptured. And he was gone. I don't know about all that kind of stuff.

I don't know where Daniel is, but I'm glad he's not in chapter 3. You say, why? I'm glad he's not in chapter 3 because in chapter 1, where these men are mentioned, they were clearly followers of Daniel. They were followers. Daniel was the one that decided, and they said, yeah, us too.

They were followers. But in chapter 3, they're not followers. Daniel's not around.

They're standing on their own six feet. And I'll tell you, I'm glad Daniel's there. I don't know where he is.

But I'm glad he's not there because it shows that these men have come to see this for themselves. And not just follow some other man or some other Christian. Now look at their faith.

They seem not to have a drop of presumption mixed in their faith. They're leaving God completely free to do whatever He wants. They know He can deliver.

They're not sure He will, but now what? Because in chapter 1, they said, all we want to do is please Him. Now listen to what they say. This is their faith.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. What a place to be in.

To really, not just words. We're talking about living. To be in a place where we can honestly say before God, it doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter if I'm up or if I'm down. It doesn't matter if I win or if I lose. It doesn't matter if I succeed or if I fail.

It doesn't matter if I'm sick or healthy. It doesn't matter if I'm weak or if I'm strong. It doesn't matter if I remain single or if I get married.

Think of that. It doesn't matter. They've come a long way.

It doesn't matter if I abound or if I suffer loss. It doesn't matter if I live or die. That's what they said.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if my family lives or dies. Think of it.

That's where they were in their faith. Now I'm not talking about just words. These brothers had come to that place where they just said, all I want is to please Him and nothing else matters.

Boy, I'll tell you. That's where the furnace lost its power to destroy. Remember I asked the question, when did their faith take away the fury of the fire? Here's the answer.

Not when they got in the furnace. Before they got in the furnace. Before they got in the furnace.

When they stood before Nebuchadnezzar. See they already dealt with the furnace in their heart. And when they stood before Nebuchadnezzar and said, Our God can.

I don't know if He will. It doesn't matter. They had already robbed the fire of all its power.

Long before they got in the furnace. They had a furnace in their heart. That had been dealt with already.

So by the time they got to the furnace, no problem. In that sense, may I suggest, the furnace is cool. And that's the grace of God.

And that's where it really is. When you come to the place where it just doesn't matter, but that He's honored. What can hurt you? You see the power of the flame is gone.

When you've settled it with God, that all you want to do is please Him and nothing else matters. If it matters, this will be hot. If it matters, the furnace will be hot.

You know, it's so easy to say, Well, nothing matters. Just whatever God wants. Sometime you can hear some testimonies that are given on the grace of God.

And you have to scratch your head and wonder if it's really the grace of God. Oh, it was a hard time. I got through.

I committed it to the Lord. Praise God. Oh, I thought I'd die.

I thought I'd come apart. I thought I'd be unglued. I thought I'd never make it.

I was about to have a nervous breakdown. That doesn't sound like the fire's cool. It sounds like not the grace of God.

It sounds like they didn't deal with it before the furnace. It sounds like they waited until they got into the furnace and then they struggled along. What am I going to do? What am I going to do? If you've got it dealt with now, you don't have to worry about any furnace that's coming down the road.

And that's what they did. If it matters to you whether you get promoted or not, if it matters to you whether you get married or not or get that new car or not or get accepted into that college or not, if it matters whether people like you or not, when that furnace comes, you're going to have a real problem. Anyway, that's what made the fire cool.

Not the special miracle God did once they got in, but their hearts before they got in when they had settled it with the Lord. In this connection, when you come to chapter 3 and you see the faith of these men, when a person has come to the place where he says nothing else matters, that person hardly knows he's gone through a furnace. Now, if you and I were there and observed these men, we might have rubbed our brows and said, how could they go through that? Look at the flame.

Look at the smoke. How could they go through that? But from their point of view, they didn't even know they were going through the furnace. I have a friend, a close friend, that I work with several times a week.

He's got MS. MS has had it for many, many years, since 1975. And I remember one time, we always fellowship together and study together and all. And as I was trying to give him therapy and stretch him out, remember now, he can't move.

Well, he can move his head a little bit, but he has no dexterity at all. And I was feeling sort of blue, and I just said, you know, the Lord never tested me. I'm so blessed.

Everything about my life and my kids and my wife and my family, I'm just blessed. And I was feeling bad, feeling guilty for being so blessed. And I'm just saying, oh, you know, maybe something's wrong in my heart and all.

And I said, I've never been tested. You know what he said to me? He said, neither have I. He didn't even know it. Billions laying there, have been laying there for years, and he doesn't even know he's been tested.

Because of the grace of God. When you've gone through it, from those on the outside, they know it. But for those who are going through it, the furnace is cool.

Well, you can certainly see the faith of these men. God can. I don't know if He will, but it doesn't matter.

Read this chapter and you say, wow, what faith. That's the man God uses? Uh-oh. Maybe that leaves me out.

And then you begin to continue to read, and you say, boy, their surrender was every bit as great as their faith. You talk about a total surrender. It's not like these fellows didn't know the consequences.

And it's not like they weren't given a second chance. They knew what they were about to face, and they were given an opportunity to back down. And at the end, Nebuchadnezzar says in verse 28, His servants put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, yielding up their bodies, so as not to serve or worship any other god except their own God.

Yielded up their bodies. It was a complete surrender. Total surrender.

A fearless entering in. Now, I'm not trying to scare you, but I've deliberately called attention to this fact that they trusted implicitly, and they surrendered unflinchingly. And you look at that faith and that surrender, and if you're anything like me, you'll say, wow.

Chapter 1, I was a little bit comfortable in. Chapter 2, alright. But when it comes to chapter 3, if this is the kind of a person God uses, maybe I better sign out now.

Maybe I can't have that kind of faith and that surrender to quench the violence of fire and to come to the place where I honestly not only say, but honestly live and believe that nothing matters except His heart, except His will, except His pleasure. Chapter 1, all he did was want to please God. And I say, well, I can want to please God.

In chapter 2, he had this great revelation of Christ, but come on, he was sleeping. Right? He didn't have much to do with that. He was unconscious.

And so I say, well, you know, maybe I can enter into chapter 2 if he does it while I'm unconscious. If he does it while I'm sleeping. But then I come to chapter 3 and I look at this surrender and I look at this faith and I say, well, if God's going to use people like that, then maybe that just leaves me out.

I don't think I could ever trust that implicitly and surrender that unflinchingly. When I hear that terrible music, maybe I will bow down with the drumbeat of this world and bow down before that image. So I can identify with chapter 1, chapter 2, but chapter 3, that's a little high, that's a little noble, that's a little exalted, that's a little beyond me.

Now, it's true, the Holy Spirit calls attention to their faith and surrender. But, if I'm reading this right, He calls attention to it in order to turn our eyes away from it, rather than unto it. If it's true that you can identify with chapter 1, now let me say this statement, you're going to hear this a lot for the rest of the chapters because it gets a little bit tougher.

The Christian life will never become more difficult than Daniel chapter 1. It will never become more difficult to chapter 1. What did they say in chapter 1? They said, I only want to please the Lord, I will not defile myself. What did they say in chapter 3? I only want to please the Lord, I will not defile myself. There's no difference.

It's exactly the same thing. It will never get harder than chapter 1. No matter how much you study, no matter how deep you go, no matter how much you pursue the Lord and grow in the knowledge of God, it will never become more difficult than desire. I just want to please Him.

It will never become more difficult than that. Nobody falls in chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4, chapter 5, or chapter 6. Anybody who's ever fallen has fallen in chapter 1. And anybody who ever comes back has got to go back to chapter 1 and the basics. In order to come back, he's got to come again to that place.

I just want to please Him. And then he's restored. We hear a lot about people, God's people falling away.

They didn't fall in any other chapter than in chapter 1. Now, having said all that, let's go to the context. This is what the chapter is all about. I told you this is a book of missions.

This is a book on evangelism. God's working in Nebuchadnezzar's heart. God's making Himself known.

And He's going to use men like this. Something turned Nebuchadnezzar's head. Something got his attention.

Something made him stop dead in his tracks. Something turned him. And may I say, he was not impressed with their surrender.

That didn't turn his head. And he was not impressed with their faith either. In fact, he was quite unimpressed with their faith.

He thought they were stupid. He thought they were fools. He was underwhelmed with their faith and their surrender.

That isn't what brought him to Christ. That isn't what manifested Christ. To him, that was foolhardy.

That was stupid for them to do that. That did not turn his head. Something did.

When we look at faith and surrender, don't just say, Oh, I wish I had that kind of faith. I wish I had that kind of surrender. You have that kind of desire, and that kind of faith and surrender will come.

That will flow. That's automatic. You don't work at that.

You take your eyes off faith. You take your eyes off surrender. You say, I just want to please Him.

And you'll end up with that kind of faith and that kind of surrender. There's no question about that. That's never the issue.

But something turned his head. And what was it? As we get ready to close, let me show you in chapter 3 so we don't get lost in faith and surrender. Let me show you two things God used to turn this king around.

The reason this is so tremendous is because it doesn't change. This is the same thing in our days as it was way back then. As far as the record goes, the first thing that made Nebuchadnezzar turn around, I'll state it as a principle, and then we'll look at it, was their liberty.

That bothered him. That bothered him. Chapter 320, Tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Tie them up. Put them in barns. Shackle them.

Restrain them. Verse 24, Then, see this is the first record of it, Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded. That turned his head.

He stood up in haste. He responded and he said to the high officials, Was it not three men we cast bound into the furnace of the fire? And then he says in verse 25, He answered and said, Look, I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm. The fact that they were free got to Nebuchadnezzar.

Don't try to understand chapter 3 without chapter 2. God had discovered to his remnant, to these men, the glory of the revelation of Christ. Christ was the stone. Christ had come in.

Christ had knocked down the old and was establishing the new. That's what this chapter is all about and that's what the furnace is all about. The old system resists the stone.

Resists Christ. It doesn't want to come down. It's not like it's just saying, Ok, come on Christ, take down the old.

It resists tooth and nail. The old kingdom does not want to be replaced. And when Nebuchadnezzar saw these men who had been struck with the stone, he was infuriated.

He was angry. They refused allegiance to his kingdom. He said, you will bow down.

You're not going to change allegiance. You're going to bow down. Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar had these men tied up? Why didn't he just throw them in the fire? Why did he tie them up? And I believe this is the answer.

Those ropes or chains or bonds, whatever they were, that was the last hold that the old kingdom had on them. That was it. That was their last hold.

That was the last thing, the last ditch effort to keep them, to keep them bound and to hold them. But the stone had struck these men and that image was falling down and the old was being replaced by the new. Nebuchadnezzar saw it coming down and tried to tie it up and hold it up.

You're not going to understand this chapter unless you remember that there was a peephole in the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was looking in. He was watching.

They didn't know that. He was watching. He was looking.

There was always a peephole in the furnace. And the unsaved are always looking in. And I'm sure when Nebuchadnezzar looked in, he expected to see them writhing in pain and struggling and crying out in torment, screaming in agony and struggling to get out.

But he looked in and they were free. They were free. They were walking around.

No hurry. No striving. No anxiety.

Having a friendly stroll through the fire. May I say that's the beginning of the manifestation of Christ. When there is a man or a woman or a people and this world has no more hold on them, they are free from this world system.

That is what gets their attention. When they walk free, and I'll tell you there's no sermon. Like the sermon of the free Christian.

The heart set free. Was that liberty that Nebuchadnezzar saw? And it was just this liberty from the old system. They were set free.

Wouldn't respond to the conformity to this world. May I say this brothers and sisters in Christ? The unsaved. See, things haven't changed.

There's a peephole in the furnace. And the unsaved are looking in. And when they see Christians walking free, they marvel.

Because they know nothing of that. They don't know anything about that freedom. Walking five minutes in real liberty.

Being set free from this world system is worth all the years of formal training and seminary and Bible school and study and all the commendations and certificates and all that you can ever receive. There's something in this that's miraculous. You see, Nebuchadnezzar's head didn't turn when he got all the Jews.

They were all in bondage. He had seen plenty of captivity. Christians doesn't happen when Christians are in bondage.

He wasn't moved by that. That didn't turn his head. Here, when the world has done its best to keep God's people down and still they're free.

That becomes a testimony. There's a second thing that turned his head. And of course, finally revealed the Lord Jesus to him.

And that was the fellowship that these saints were having with the Son of God. Fellowship. They were walking with the Son of God.

And when he looked in and he saw those two things, he saw that they were free and that bothered him. And he saw that there weren't three or four. And they were walking with somebody else.

And they were in a fellowship together and enjoying that fellowship. It touched his heart. It began to move him.

That was the manifestation of Christ. The burning of the bands by the crashing of the stone. And then this walk with God.

That was the growing of the mountain. Verse 24, Was it not three men we cast? Verse 25, Look, behold, I see four men and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods. I don't know how much greater the light of the furnace became by increasing the intensity seven times.

But however bright that furnace was, this I know, the Lord Jesus was brighter. And there he is in this bright furnace. And that grips him.

Now remember, it wasn't Christ alone that gripped Nebuchadnezzar. And it wasn't these three men alone that gripped Nebuchadnezzar. It was when he saw them together walking in the midst of this fire.

That's what got him. That's what turned his head. That's what began stirring up inside of him.

God is making himself known to men like Nebuchadnezzar. Men like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They don't know anything about that.

They didn't know that. They didn't know they were going through this because God's working over here with them. They had no idea that someone was looking in that peephole.

They had no idea about missions and soul winning and all the rest. All they knew is the stone had come and took down the old and blew it away and began to build anew. All they knew is finally they were free from the old.

All they knew is now they could walk in a fellowship with the Son of God. And when they were free, and when they were walking in fellowship, Christ came out of that experience. Christ was seen.

That's what Christ is seen. And He's not seen any other time except when you're free. And when you walk in fellowship with the Son of God.

That's the manifestation of Christ. That's how it comes. That's how it always comes.

And I suggest again, since this is talking about soul winning, the last thing in the world that these men were thinking about was witnessing. They weren't trying to soul win. They weren't trying to evangelize.

They weren't trying to saturate Babylon with literature, get the gospel out. They were just knowing their God. They were just knowing the Lord.

They were set free. They were walking in fellowship. And that became the testimony.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you're not going to get greater chapters on soul winning and missions than these. And honestly, I'm not going to get into a sparring session with the whole Christian church, but oh, I think we've missed it. I think we've missed it.

And we've got all these great programs to reach the lost and to reach the world. And who's free? And who's walking with Christ? That's where Christ is manifested. And God's looking for men like Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego and Daniel who've set their hearts.

Yes, there'll be faith. Yes, there'll be surrender. But that's a by-product.

That's an outwork. Do you think Stephen, remember in the New Testament when he was stoned? Chapter 7 of Acts. Do you think Stephen was saying, Oh Lord, now I'm ready to die.

I want to be a good testimony. Help me love my accusers. Maybe if I use the same words Jesus used.

Lord, don't lay this sin to their charge. And receive my spirit, Lord Jesus. He wasn't looking at the stones.

And he wasn't looking at the accusers. And he wasn't looking at some high standard on how to turn the other cheek so he could die with a good testimony. Acts 7 tells us what he was looking at.

He said Stephen being filled with the Holy Ghost looked up and saw the glory of God. And saw the Lord Jesus standing at his right hand. That's what he was looking at.

And that was the testimony. He didn't say, Oh, I think I'll lead Paul to Christ here now. Have a chance to witness.

He just set his eyes on the Lord. Just set his eyes on Christ. Set his eyes on the glory of God.

And then the testimony came. That's missions. Really nothing else is.

Now, don't you think we've said it all. Choose Christ. Christ is revealed.

Christ is manifest. What's left? What follows manifestation? Chapter 4. Chapter 5. Chapter 6 is not over. That's not the whole story of missions.

It begins with a set in your heart. It's followed by the revelation of Christ through this book. Then Christ is manifest.

Then... Stay tuned next week. This isn't the whole story. And so, next time.

And please read. And I'm going to ask you to read chapters 4 and 5. Because God gives the same principle in 4 and 5. He illustrates it negatively in chapter 4. Or rather positively in 4. Negatively in 5. It's the same principle. But it's illustrated two ways.

Comments or questions? About the chapter. Laura. It's interesting.

Before you do. A couple of weeks now in a row. You see, Corinthians.

Is the fully... 2 Corinthians, right? 2 Corinthians is the fully developed form of Daniel. Daniel is seed form. 2 Corinthians is the same message in fully developed form.

And so it's interesting that you're always choosing that book. But go ahead. I didn't mean to... I'm not trying to steal your thunder here.

Go ahead. Thank you. You might want to read that same passage again.

Because it contains the principle for the next chapter. It's in that passage. Okay.

Other comments? Questions? Let's pray together. And then we can fellowship. Father, we do thank you.

That your word is always the same from age to age. Lord, we just long that Christ be manifest in our lives. Thank you for giving us pictures of how that happens.

We want to be those who have set their hearts just to please the Lord. Thank you for setting us free. Enable us to walk in that liberty.

Thank you for providing a way that we can fellowship with you. Help us to walk in that fellowship with the Son of God. That we might be your reputation on the earth.

Manifest yourself through us, we pray. Now, Lord, we just ask you to work these truths into our lives. Thank you so much for the provision of the refreshments tonight.

We'd ask you to nourish our bodies through them. Thank you for those who in love provided them. Now guide our fellowship and enable us to build each other up and to edify one another.

And just enjoy the Lord Jesus in each one. Help us to just do that. We commit our fellowship unto you now.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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