

Rebuilding After the Apostasy
Lesson 3 – Rebuild Expecting to be Tested!
(A Study of Daniel 3)
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Introduction: If you become a follower of God then expect to be tested!

- A. One of the great mistakes some make is thinking that only “leaders” have to pay a price for their faith.
 - 1. Jesus made it plain to His disciples that what happened to Him would happen to them! **(Jn 15:18-23)**
 - 2. The truth is that one cannot have a saving faith without paying a high price. **(2 Tim 3:12; Mt 10:37-38)**
- B. Those who have come to know God realize that these times of testing are for their good.
 - 1. What gift does God give in addition to faith? **(Phil 1:27-30)**
 - 2. When we are emptied of self then the times of trial brings rejoicing. **(Heb 10:32-34; 1 Pt 1:7-9)**
 - 3. Remember, this testing is essential so that we might know we are in Christ. **(2 Cor 13:5-6)**

I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Monument to Himself (3:1-7)

- A. All the power and glitter the world could muster was put into this event. **(1 Jn 2:15-17)**
 - 1. The image was made of the most expensive material, gold.
 - 2. The image was huge suggesting great wealth and power. It was 90 ft. by 9 ft. approximately 8 stories tall!
 - 3. Anyone who was “anybody” was at this event! A real “who’s who” in the Babylonian kingdom.
 - 4. The most modern instruments and the most talented musicians were to perform.
 - 5. It was to represent the god who was behind this great kingdom.
 - 6. It had support of the vast majority. It had the numbers!
 - 7. Worldly religions always appeal to the flesh.
- B. Some suggest that Nebuchadnezzar had just finished conquered Jerusalem.
 - 1. While this differs from our suggested time line, the Septuagint version says this occurred in the 18th year of his reign some 16 years after Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.
 - 2. In either case Nebuchadnezzar is full of himself.
 - a. His whole statue is of gold, not just the head!
 - b. He is referred to as “king” seven times in this chapter as compared to nine times in the entire book.
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten what he learned from Daniel.
 - a. While we may be humbled at a given time, it is hard to stay humble.
 - b. Remember!
- C. The intolerance of worldly religion **(3:4-6)**

1. Worldly religion will let you do what you wish as long as you also go along with them.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar did not care if they continued in “the church of their choice,” he wanted them to also approve his!
 - b. Would that be a compromise?

“Strangely, the expounders of many of the great new ideas of history were frequently considered on the lunatic fringe for some or all of their lives. If one stands up and is counted, from time to time one may get knocked down. But remember this: a man flattened by an opponent can get up again. A man flattened by conformity stays down for good.” -- Thomas J. Watson, Jr., Chairman of Board, IBM, *Leadership*, Vol. 1, no. 1.

2. When you refuse to participate, even when you do not say a word, you become a threat to them. (**1 Pt 4:4; Heb 11:7**)
3. Sometimes worldliness will use the terms: “grace, peace, sweetness, positive religion.”
 - a. The worst abuse I have received has come from those who talk much about these things!
 - b. Does that “grace” remain when they are challenged by God’s word?

“Years ago, an older preacher told me of a warning he had received years before from Cled Wallace. He said, “Watch out for the real sweet men. They will rip you to pieces when they get a chance.” I have received more unkind and unjust treatment over the years from those who had the most to say about love, kindness, gentleness and such nobler qualities, but who could not tolerate any criticism about what they were teaching.” Connie Adams - *Watch Which Dogs?- Guardian of Truth, 1997*

Class Discussion:

1. Why does the world in fact hate Christ? Will we be treated any differently?
2. Why does a godly example anger many?
3. Does worldly religion use Bible words and speak well about some Bible attributes of character? What then makes them (us) different?

II. Satan’s Work of Accusation (3:8-12)

A. The charge against “certain Jews.”

1. It was made as a personal affront to Nebuchadnezzar: “these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you.”
2. It is made to appear that these men in pride: “do not serve **your** gods or worship the gold image which **you** have set up.”
3. When the issue is made **personal** then it becomes a matter of **comparison!**
Who is smarter than the king?
4. Why was it not “all the Jews?”
 - a. Sadly there are few that are willing to stand up and be counted when it

might cost them something. Many will gladly take a stand when the battle is already fought and won. **(Gal 5:11;6:12)**

George Bernard Shaw's statement frequently flashes through my mind: "Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it."

b. Those who really know God will not take the easy way out!

(Heb 11:35-36)

Hebrews 11:35 through Hebrews 11:36 (NKJV)

³⁵Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, **not accepting deliverance**, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

c. Please be careful when you quickly write off someone as a “watchdog” or “trouble-maker.” Many refuse not only to fight the battle but actually oppose those who do.

d. While Daniel is not present there are those who have the same kind of faith and will stand! Will you dare to be a Daniel?

B. The motivation of the charges.

1. It appears that these “religious” people envied the position of these men.

2. Often charges are made from hearts with evil motives. **(Mk 15:10)**

3. Some use what they can call “contending for the faith” as a mask to conceal these motives!

a. What did the religious leaders accuse Jesus of?

b. Even when we may suspect bad motives we have an obligation to hear and seek the truth. They may be right! **(Phil 1:15-18)**

4. There are some accusations we should readily plea “guilty” to.

5. These men were following their father, the Devil! **(Jn 8:44)**

a. Satan is known as the great accuser.

b. Satan does not play fair! But we must never use his tactics or he will win. **(2 Cor 10:3-5)**

c. We can accuse others of unfair accusations while carrying on a whispering campaign against them every bit as unfair. Who wins?

d. Satan’s work of accusation is thorough, if he fails in one place he returns in another!

e. He tries to make in personal and appeal to the worldliness in Nebuchadnezzar. He finds a ready participant.

Class Discussion:

1. What is the major work of Satan?

2. How should we respond to a false accusation?

3. Should we fight “fire with fire?” Why is this difficult to avoid? **(Rom 12:21)**

III. The Folly of Nebuchadnezzar's Anger (3:13-23)

A. Satan's goal is to block you from reason and make you his blind slave.

(2 Tim 2:25-26)

1. One of the best weapons Satan uses is uncontrolled anger. **(Eph 4:26-27)**
Ephesians 4:26 through Ephesians 4:27 (NKJV) ²⁶*"Be angry, and do not sin":*
do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil.

2. In anger we can do things that make us appear crazy. **(Jas 1:19-20;**

Prov 14:17,29)

B. Nebuchadnezzar's anger makes him blind to men of principle. **(4:13-18)**

1. Force will never bend men and women who stand upon truth. **(4:16)**

2. When we think truth can be negotiated then we have surrendered. **(Jn 8:32)**

3. When compromise is made in your loyalty to God, He calls it adultery.

a. How would you like to "share" your mate with another?

b. This is how God views our loyalty to Him. **(2 Cor 11:2-4)**

c. The nation of Israel heard their adultery described. **(Jer 3:6-10)**

4. Fellowship in time will determine practice. **(1 Cor 5:5-6)**

a. What if they had done it just this one time? **(Eph 5:3 KJV)**

b. Maybe they should have made this a "Romans 14 issue," and proclaim themselves loyal to God while fellowshipping the idolaters!

C. While how God would deliver these men is in doubt, they knew God would act! It may have been they become examples as martyrs! **(4:17-18)**

1. Abraham even knew of some possible things God might do. **(Heb 11:17-19)**

2. Abraham learned this and so did Mordecai. **(Esther 4:14)**

"Trustfulness is based on confidence in God, whose ways I do not understand. If I did, there would be no need for trust." - Oswald Chambers

3. Paul would also grant the possibility of God's actions in meeting Onesimus.

(Philemon 1:15)

4. Please be careful in attributing things to God. We could be wrong.

D. The consequences of Nebuchadnezzar's anger.

1. What is the use in heating up the fire "seven times?" Rather than increase the punishment to would do the opposite! He is not thinking. **(4:19)**

2. Some "mighty men of valor" lost their lives. **(4:20,22)**

3. His foolishness was very public! How often has anger made wise men fools?

Class Discussion:

1. What does uncontrolled anger do to us?

2. Why is a study of fellowship important?

3. What do we know and what do we not know about God's providence?

IV. When God Crashes a Party (3:24-30)

A. What started out as a great party to worldly religion turns into a great lesson in the difference between false God's and the one true God.

1. God's glory is best seen in times of conflict and difficulty.
2. Let us never be ashamed of contending for the faith. (**Jude 3**)
3. What some people think will make the church grow is a recipe for apostasy.
4. Look again at the men God is using to rebuild His people.

B. God sends an angel to protect Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. (**3:24-25**)

1. The NASV is the correct translation were it describes "a son of the god's."
Daniel 3:25 (NASB) ²⁵He said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!"

2. Nebuchadnezzar's statue seems to have lost its luster!

C. Three observations of Nebuchadnezzar. (**3:28-30**)

1. Real faith is to be admired.

"What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will be swept away, and we shall have only God. To the man of pseudo faith that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain." - A. W. Tozer

2. No worldly power or king can stand against such a faith.
3. It is better to "yield your bodies" than to yield your faith!

D. Because of the stand of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego God's people are protected.

1. If only we had the faith to know where real power comes from!
2. God further exalted these men.

E. There will be future parties God will "crash."

Conclusion: Who do I really want to have fellowship with?

A. While some say they want to be right with God, they in fact want to please men.
(Gal 1:10)

"Before we can be filled with the Spirit, the desire to be filled must be all-consuming. It must be for the time the biggest thing in the life, so acute, so intrusive as to crowd out everything else. The degree of fullness in any life accords perfectly with the intensity of true desire. We have as much of God as we actually want." - A. W. Tozer

1. While we may fool men, God knows our heart!
2. I have talked with men about what was right and what they needed to do. Even though they have agreed with me, I have often heard the refusal to stand rationalized like this: "It is hard to do what is right!"

B. What will heaven be like?

1. It will be filled with men of faith who at times had to stand alone.
(Heb 11:32-38)

"When you have no helpers, see all your helpers in God. When you have many helpers, see God in all your helpers. When you have nothing but God, see all in God. When you

have everything, see God in everything. Under all conditions, stay thy heart only on the Lord.”

2. Have you heard of these men?
 - a. Sethur? Gaddiel? Palti? Shaphat? Nahbi?
 - b. How about these men? Caleb? Joshua?

The Ruthlessness of Satan

Tom M. Roberts

Many do not like to watch "nature shows" on television wherein predators stalk, capture, and disembowel their prey even while they kick, struggle, and scream. The food chain has many links, but from the top down, each devours the other. As one commentator said, *"There is neither vengeance nor remorse in the Kalahari."* Eating is simply a matter of survival and those high on the food chain are not angry or embittered at those whom they eat. Hunger motivates the chain, parents must feed their off-spring to survive, and so the life and death struggle continues day after day, ageless millennia, from Eden until now.

However timid some may feel about the process, there is a fascination about watching a lion single out a lone animal from a huge herd, stalk it until the prey is within reach of a quick charge, then spring out and, without conscience or guilt, dispatch it ruthlessly. Once the prey is chosen, neither pity from the devourer nor terror from the one to be devoured changes anything. Remorseless, merciless, pitiless and unforgiving, the hunter takes the game.

There is a lesson in this about Satan that we often fail to appreciate.

"The Devil Is A Roaring Lion"

Among many of the descriptions of Satan, Peter spoke of him as a lion. We are the prey, and we are warned, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (**1 Pet. 5:8**). When Peter uses an analogy to describe our enemy, it is for the very reason that Satan has features like a lion. But the analogy breaks down in that the real lion eats only to live while Satan destroys out of anger, vengeance, resentment, and bitterness. The Devil destroys for the sake of destruction.

The reason for this, the Scripture teaches, is because Satan has been cast down and seeks vengeance. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (**Rev. 12:12**). Knowing his doom, Satan seeks to drag us into eternal torment with him. He is a predator, seeking prey.

One of the more chilling things revealed in the Scripture is the statement that Jesus made to Peter just prior to Jesus' arrest. During the Supper, while the disciples argued about who was greatest, shortly before Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus turned to him and said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"

(Luke 22:31). What a terrible thought! Satan knew Simon Peter's name, his weaknesses, his closeness to Jesus and he wanted to "sift" Peter to see if he could withstand the test. This statement haunts me.

Does Satan know my name? Does he desire to sift me? You? Is Satan lying in wait and stalking us like a predator after prey? Who can deny it? Like the lion, Satan has no remorse nor conscience. There is no pity, no mercy, no fair rules of conduct. He is an "adversary" that is absolutely ruthless.

Do we need to be convinced as to Satan's ruthlessness? Look at his history among men.

We can only imagine the beauty of the Garden of Eden and the fellowship that existed between God and man. Sin ruined Eden and man's life has never been the same. Our lives have been corrupted, shameful sin has plagued us and death is our lot. Satan, knowing all this, lied without compassion and said, "You shalt not surely die" (**Gen. 3:4**). Did Satan care that we would loose fellowship with God, be exiled from the Garden, and die both physically and spiritually? No, he intended to do exactly what he did, to bring misery and destruction into the lives of mankind.

The broken trail of human error can be traced (due to Satan's influence) through Abel's death by the hand of his brother, the increase of sin until God sent the flood upon all the earth, the betrayal of Esau by Jacob, the sale of Joseph by his brothers, the cruel treatment of Israel in Egypt by Pharaohs, the cycle of sin among the Judges, the sins of the kings of Israel through idolatry, Israel's captivities among the nations, the slaughter of infants at Bethlehem, Jesus' death on the cross, the martyrdom of the saints, and, even to this present day, the turmoil of sin in society and our personal lives.

Never once has Satan said, "Enough, no more, I am satisfied." Not one time has the Devil wished for the salvation of a single individual. Not once has Satan allowed a sinner to go free out of pity. The torment of the rich man in Hades (**Luke 16**) did not assuage his appetite for more victims. Eight million Jews sent to their deaths by Hitler did not satiate.

But let's make this personal. Satan has no mercy, he is ruthless. Have you lost a dear relative to death unprepared for eternity? A son? A daughter? Do you know someone under the influence of alcohol or other, stronger drugs? The Devil devours the lost, even if it is your loved one. Are your grandchildren being led astray? Only the Devil rejoices, but he does rejoice. He has "asked to have them." He has "asked to have you." His hatred knows no limits.

Look at the havoc among churches by the evil action of Satan. Fellowship is destroyed, friendships are ruined, the cause of Christ is made a "hiss and a byword," and the Devil is happy! Denominations are in the grip of error, sin abounds. While time remains, the work of evil continues. I understand that nature has gone awry due to the curse of sin on the earth. The prey being taken by the predator is the result of Eden's loss. We will never see the Garden again and Satan is loose among us. The worst horror films from Hollywood cannot match the reality of the Demon from Hell that lies in wait for each of us.

Modernism says that the fear of Satan described above is paranoia, mental sickness, and schizophrenia. That, dear friend, would be a relief. But Satan is real, altogether, and very much at work on planet Earth.

It is only in Christ that we have any hope of winning this battle. Each of us has felt the power of Satan each time we sin. We all have been "wretched" as Paul was, under the curse of sin (**Rom. 7:24**), wondering "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" This "roaring lion" has claimed us all as victims (**Rom. 3:23**). But Paul rejoiced in victory: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (**v. 25**).

By God's grace and man's obedient faith (**Eph. 2:8-9**), by the remedial power of the blood of Christ, Satan can be, and has been, conquered. All our life we have feared the Devil because of sin and death. Jesus changed all that by coming in the flesh, enduring temptation, overcoming sin and death, and setting us free. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (**Heb. 2:14-15**).

The hapless gazelle has little chance against the prowling lion, but we have Jesus on our side. When he warned Peter about Satan "desiring to have you," Jesus also said, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (**v. 32**).--- **In Guardian of Truth, 4/2/98**

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