



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Daniel 3: 1-30

“The Golden Image, the Fiery Furnace and the Son of God”

TRANSCRIPT

Let's look to the Lord for a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] We are thankful to Thee, Lord for the privilege of the study of Thy Word and we pray Thy blessing upon this class and the classes that follow. May Our Savior be lifted up in them and may the teaching of the word of God strengthen us for the Christian life.

Especially bring before Thee, [name redacted], who has had this very serious operation, and we pray that if it should be Thy will that he may be brought safely through and we pray for his family and for others involved. For the doctors who administer to him, give them wisdom and guidance and skill and meet the needs of the family; supply all of the spiritual, and any other needs that may exist there. We bring him to Thee with great concern for his well being.

And now Lord as we look to Thy word, we pray that Thou would guide and direct us in this hour for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Returning to Daniel chapter 3 tonight and in order to save a little time, I will only read the passage of Scripture as we come to the particular section of it. This

chapter is 30 verses long and the verses occasionally are rather long and so in this way; we will save just a little bit of time by not reading it twice.

The subject is the "Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace". Daniel's three companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had an experience that is almost as well known as their names. There was a country preacher once who was determined to use this story as an illustration in his sermon but to his dismay, he found that he had a little bit of difficulty in remembering Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and so he wrote the names down and put them on in the little slip of paper on the inside of his pocket. So when he came to the appropriate place, he sure enough had forgotten the names and so he turned and looked in and called out Hart, Schaffner, and Marx. [Laughter]

They were Hebrew children, no doubt, but the wrong ones. I am indebted to Dr. Donald Campbell for that story in his book on the Book of Daniel, but I thought it was very good. He will enjoy the fact that you laughed at it, so in chapter 11 and verse 33 and verse 34 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read, concerning some of the great men of faith, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions -- that's Daniel -- and quenched the power of fire -- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego -- escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. So we know of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, not only from Daniel chapter 3, but also from the New Testament.

Now in the opening studies or study of our Book of Daniel, I suggested to you that the usual division of the Book of Daniel is to call the first six chapters "historical chapters" and then the last six chapters "prophetical chapters." Now of course when we come to chapter 3 and read through it, it is obvious that this is a chapter in which we have historical material. But there is also a strikingly prophetic significance to this chapter if we look at it as illustrative of biblical prophecy. In fact, it almost is a chapter that we

could call typical. Let me just point out to you some of the things that obviously are illustrative of the last days of the program of God upon the earth.

We have Nebuchadnezzar, the king, who sets up an image of, while it's not of himself, nevertheless, an image of gold suggestive of his own kingdom. And that surely is suggestive to us of the Beast during the last days. We will set up an image and call upon all men to worship him by means of his false prophet. The image itself is suggestive of the abomination of the desolation which the false prophet shall set up in the temple of God and use as a means for the worship of the Beast. The Hebrews who find themselves in the fiery furnace suggest to us the Nation Israel, and particularly the Nation Israel in the Tribulation, the fiery furnace suggesting the tribulation period of the last days when, as a nation, they shall enter into the most severe of persecutions, called in Scripture “the time of Jacob's trouble.” And then the deliverance, the unusual deliverance by one who was like a son of the gods is suggestive to us of the second coming deliverance of our Lord Jesus, by which he will deliver the nation Israel from the judgments and establish the nation in its headship over the kingdom that is to come. So even in the midst of the historical sections, there is remarkable resemblance, even typical relationships established with the last days and the program of God is set forth in Scripture concerning them.

Let's turn now to the setting up of the image. And let me read verses 1 through 3 for the first of our divisions tonight.

“Nebuchadnezzar, the King, made an image of gold, the height of which was 60 cubits and its width 6 cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then, Nebuchadnezzar, the King, sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the province, to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the King, had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the rulers of the provinces were

assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

Now, we notice simply that this takes place on the plane of Dura, near Babylon. And did you notice in the first verse, the emphasis that rests upon the number six. We have sixty-six, we have six, so that the number of six predominates, and in Scripture, as you well know, the number of six is the number of man. This is why the beast's number is 666. And so we have suggested here in the setting up of this image with these 6's, the manmade worship and of course, that is exactly what this is designed to be in the plain of Dura near the city of Babylon.

We also read of an image of gold, and from the 2nd chapter, we remember that gold was the metal of Nebuchadnezzar. This image was a rather strange-looking image because it was 60 cubits high or 90 feet high but rather narrow and what it looked like, we do not know. Whether it looked like Nebuchadnezzar or not, the Scriptures do not tell us here. But the purpose is to call all men to a kind of universal worship. You don't have to read much in the Bible again to think of the last days when the beast shall call all men to the worship of himself through the false prophet. If you have time, we could turn to 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4 and Revelation chapter 13 and verse 12. So, Nebuchadnezzar is claiming a kind of universal sovereignty.

I would imagine that while these details are not too clear from history that what he intended to do was to use this as a means of unifying his kingdom. Later on in the time of the Apostles and shortly after, it was the intention of some of the Roman rulers to unite their empire around the worship of Caesar. And so they sought to invest certain customs with that particular significance taking pinches of incense and burning them and crying out, "Caesar is Lord!" Everyone would do this and thus they would acknowledge in a kind of sacramental way that they were politically subservient to Caesar or the Roman ruler. It was a political thing and not particularly a spiritual thing. It was political in the

sense that the roman emperor is sought by requiring all men to do this. They could have a form of political union. But, of course, when the Christians came, they could never say, "Caesar is Lord!" They could only say, "Jesus Christ is Lord!" And therefore the thing that the Roman rulers thought to make simply a means of political union became something that the Christians could not yield to and therefore there could not be any union, so far as they were concerned.

The next division begins in the 4th verse through the 7th verse, and here we read of the proclamation of the king.

"Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'To you the command is given, O peoples, nations, and men of every language, that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon...trigon was an ancient instrument of triangular shape, that is why it is called trigon, psaltery, (bagpipe...the Scots were there) and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the King has set up. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.' Therefore at that time when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music; all the peoples, nations, and men of every language fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up."

So on account of playing of the royal orchestra, it was required of all of them that they fall down and worship the image. Well, you can imagine what happens now with the Hebrews and so the next section begins at verse 8 through verse 12, and details the accusation that the Chaldeans make against the Hebrews who, of course, could not bow down and worship the image. For this reason, we read in verse 8,

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"At that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the King, 'O king, live forever! You yourself, O king have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon...you see why I did not want to read the chapter through twice...trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image. But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.'

"There are certain Hebrews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. These men, O king have disregarded you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

You can tell from this that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, though it has been sometime now since they were taken captive, have not allowed the world to turn their heads or their hearts. Their yieldedness was still to the Lord. And again there is such a remarkable parallel with things in the Book of Revelation because remember in the last days, there will be the image set up, the false prophet will call upon all men to worship the beast; but we read about some who do not.

In chapter 13 and verse 8 of the Book of Revelation, I will read it, you need not look there, "And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the Lamb who has been slain." And so now we will be universal worship except of those who are the elect of God. So those whose names are not written, they all fall down and worship the image of the beast and here everybody seems to fall down except for the Hebrews, and they brought charges against them for that reason. If you have a New American Standard Bible, you will notice that the literal rendering of "and brought charges is and ate the pieces of" which was the Hebrew idiom for a very strong slander.

Now, is it not interesting that they conclude on the note of, "they have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up"? Now, here we have one false charge with two true charges. It is not true that they have disregarded Nebuchadnezzar, but it is certainly true that they do not serve the gods of Nebuchadnezzar and they have not worshipped the golden image, which he set up. So there is a mixture here of that which is true and false, and of course that always is the kind of thing that is most difficult to answer.

The next section begins with verse 13 and goes through verse 18, and we notice that Nebuchadnezzar, one of the great world rulers, may have conquered the world but he has not conquered himself for we read in verse 13, "Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger." That's always a mistake, is it not? So he may have conquered all of those nations about him but he had not yet mastered Nebuchadnezzar. So in rage and anger, he gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, then these men were brought before the king. Nebuchadnezzar responded. Evidently, he has cooled down just a little bit now because he is going to give them a second chance. Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?" He does not say incidentally that you have disregarded me. Evidently he rather thought that was not such a hot charge himself.

Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image that I have made very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" So he tempers his rage with a second chance.

Now Nebuchadnezzar is the same one who had come to know the God who had revealed secrets in chapter 2, but evidently he is not yet a man who knows the God who delivers from a fiery furnace. It is an illustration of the fact that we may have some understanding of the true God, but not necessarily all understanding. In fact, we may

have some understanding of the true God and not necessarily saving understanding of the true God. And I do not suggest necessarily that if he should know that this God is a God who reveals secrets and delivers men that he is thereby, a saved man. You can see that there are degrees of knowledge and this man has some knowledge but there is some knowledge that he does not have.

We look now at the response of the three Hebrews. I wonder where Daniel was at this time. Our commentators have always asked that question, "Where was Daniel?" because he surely would not have bowed his knee. Some have suggested he was off from the city on business. Well, he was a very important man and it's possible this was during the week and he was a traveling man and was gone. Others, that he was sick; but at any rate he was not there. Where he was, we don't know. The response is given in verse 16 through 18. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not... I'd like for you to notice that. Even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Now this is the spirit of Luke chapter 12 and verse 4 were we read in one of the famous statements of our Lord Jesus Christ, I will read it for you, "And I say to you my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." So here are three men who do not fear Nebuchadnezzar because they do not fear anyone who simply kills the body. The thing that they are particularly concerned about is the one who is able to destroy our soul and so they answer him with great courage.

One of the commentators has commented that evangelical Christians themselves are often great rationalizers of spiritual things and these Hebrews could have rationalized as follows, he suggests. Well, they could have said one to another, "Well we are not

required to forsake the worship of Jehovah forever but only for a moment. So why should we not bow down to the image. It doesn't mean anything. After all images are nothing to us, so we will do it. But that does not mean we have abandoned the worship of Jehovah." In fact they might even have said, "We will bow down to him when we have to, but we really bow down to Jehovah because we are particularly worshippers of him." They didn't rationalize that way. They did not say, "We are not required to become idolaters, but only to bow down one time. We can do that quickly with mental reservations and then confess, after all does not 1 John chapter 9 say, "Rebound and keep moving and so we will confess our sins and then we will keep moving."

Now, I do not want to make fun of the texts in Scripture that speak about confession of sin. I do believe that when Christians confess sin. When they sin, they should confess their sin. That is true. But they do not argue in that light, insignificant, artificial or superficial kind of way. They do not say we need to consider that Nebuchadnezzar has treated us well. He has educated us. He has appointed us to positions of honor. This act of obedience would show our appreciation. Even if it does strain our conscience just a little bit. But he has been a nice man to us. And, furthermore, he has given us a good job.

Well, they didn't say we are here in a strange land, a thousand miles from home. Did not the Scriptures predict that those driven out of their homeland would serve strange gods? So after all we are just fulfilling Scripture, like some of those Calvinists talk about the fact that we have got to fulfill the Scripture. So that's what we are doing. When in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do.

They did not argue that way. Note he says, "What about our ancestors? They set up idols in the temples of Jerusalem as well as erecting altars all over the land. Must be all right because everybody is doing it." Or if we bow down to the image, our lives will be spared. We will continue to occupy our strategic positions in government and be able to help our people when they need it. And so, we will be a witness in our own church

which is liberal and has no preaching of the gospel at all, but we will just be a testimony there. And even though we may have our roles on the place where apostasy is proclaimed and where preachers are proclaiming truth that is diametrically opposed to Christianity, we will just be a witness where we are. There are evangelicals who rationalize that way.

Now, you can see that these three men are not like that. They are fearless and they have a tremendous understanding of the uniqueness of Jehovah and of his great power and they will worship him even if it means their life. They admit their guilt. They say to the King, "It's true. We have not bowed down and we won't bow down to that image." They affirmed their faith. They say our God is able to deliver us. And, furthermore, they do act like Calvinists. They believe that it is perfectly all right to submit themselves to the will of God. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of the blazing fire. But if he does not, let it be known to your king that we are not going to serve your god.

So, whatever may be the will of God for us, we submit to that. We know, however, our God is able to do what he wants to do. Now, I think this is one of the great expressions of faith in verse 18. He says, "But even if, he does not." There are people who like to speak a lot about obeying God and that like to talk about submitting to God. They make statements like, "Well, God will work for us." But suppose he does not. God will heal. We pray concerning the sick. And we say, "he will heal." But suppose he doesn't. God will deliver or he is able to deliver, but suppose he does not. Now, the truest test of faith is to respond when the answer is "No" and to be prepared for a "No" answer. You don't have to be a Christian very long and to get in situations in which you need answers to prayer to know that sooner or later, you are going to get a "No."

And you are going to pray and you are going to say now if it be the Lord's will, but you are thinking primarily it is the Lord's will that it be done. But the answer is going to come back "No." And then that is the test. Is my faith still in this God when the

answer is "No"? But if he does not, let it be known to you O king that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up ,and we will be perfectly happy if it is necessary for us to lose our lives because we know that our God has determined in that case that that should come to pass.

Now, we have some beautiful illustrations of this in the Bible. The greatest, of course, is our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, who prayed, "Oh my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, if it be no, not my will but Thine be done." John Chrysostom lived in the 4th and 5th century. He was one of the greatest of the Greek Church fathers. As a very young Christian, he was brought before the emperor and the emperor is supposed to have said to him something like this, that if he would give up Christ, then all would be fine, but if he would not give up the Lord and went on insisting on becoming a Christian, the emperor said, "I will banish you from the country, your father's land and I will banish you." Chrysostom said, "You cannot, the whole world is my father's land, you cannot banish me." The emperor said, "Then I will take away all your property." Chrysostom said, "You cannot, my treasures are in heaven." The emperor then tried again, saying, "I'll send you to a place where there is not a friend to speak to." He said, "You cannot, I have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. I have my brother Jesus Christ forever." And the emperor finally threatened, "I'll take away your life." He said, "You cannot, my life is hid with Christ in God."

Now Chrysostom is of the same spirit as these men. A story is found in Arthur Petree's little book, *The Message of Daniel*. "Even if he does not, we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Of verses 19 through 23, we read of the tribulation of the Jews, "Fiery trials, incidentally, do come to the saints, even literal fiery trials." So we read in verse 19, "Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated."

Now that was a mistake. That was a mistake because if you are going to burn somebody, you want a slow fire, not a real hot fire. And this cost the lives of some of his own men. So when you get angry, you are liable to do foolish things. And even the king did foolish things. So, heat it seven times more than it is usually heated and lost three of his guards and several of them as a result of it." And he commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego and ordered to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their other clothes and were cast into the midst of the burning fire. For this reason, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of fires slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

Now, you learn a very interesting little principle here which some of us love even though sometimes it kind of cuts hard with us. But you will notice the same flame burns the valiant warriors, but it does not burn the three Hebrews. The very same flame that takes the life of these men quickly is a flame that Shadrach and his two companions do not even feel. Now we often talk about distinguishing grace. And by that we refer to the fact that God puts his hand upon some people and he does not put his hand on others. Wherever you go in the Bible, it is there. It is the doctrine of the distinguishing grace of God. It stems from the eternal unconditional election of God. And here it is illustrated in this case, what have these men done that was wrong? Why are these men and not the others standing around who were going to enjoy the death of the three Hebrews? You see, it is true, the same flame does at times burn and then it does not burn. God has his purposes, which are beyond our final understanding. There's no question about that.

Well let's read on about the deliverance of the Jews in verses 24 through 27, "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded, and stood up in haste." He was evidently looking into the midst of this furnace that was a furnace in which you could look

evidently through the door as the smoke coming up through the top, but they were thrown in very much like you would throw coal into a railroad. Voila! So he was astounded and he responded and said to his high officials,

"Was it not three men we cast into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." He answered and said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about into the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out into the midst of the fire.

"The satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's high officials gathered around and saw, in regard to this men, that 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."

Now, God did all of these in order, of course, to make it very evident that this was something absolutely unusual and no trick that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had played. So humanly speaking, they triumphed by faith. As in the New Testament we read, "Through faith, they quenched the mouth of lions and they also quenched the fiery furnace."

Now, isn't that interesting? It says, "Through faith they did," in the New Testament? Now, we know from the Bible that faith comes by prayer. But of course, no, the Bible does not say that, doesn't? A lot of people think that. They think that if they get down on their knees and pray, "Oh God, give me faith that faith will come."

Now, [those who think] faith comes that way, [think] it will come because there is some inner voice that says, "Go read the Bible," because faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. I am sure the Lord often would like to say to people who

get on their knees and pray, "Oh, God give me more faith." Get up off your knees and start reading the Bible. Because it is through the word of God that faith comes. It is through the Scriptures that we are built up and nourished in our faith. The reason so many of us cannot face the trials of life is that we have not read these Scriptures and therefore, we do not have the strength that comes from the food of the word of God.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God," the Lord Jesus said. So, these men did this by faith. It is clear that they were acquainted with the revelation of God. It was the revelation of God. It wasn't their courage. It was the revelation of God that gave them the courage, gave them the faith. All of these things that they expressed are ultimately traceable to the fact that they were men of the word of God. That's why it's so important for us to read the Bible. That's why we keep belaboring that point, week after week, month after month, year after year, *ad nauseam*, to use a Latin expression. Now for those who do not know Latin that means "to nausea." Read the Bible. Study the Bible. This is one of the great sources of spiritual strengthening and development. So humanly speaking, they triumphed through the faith that came from the word of God and of course divinely lead; it was the divine power that stood behind the truth that had become a part of them.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar when he looked into the furnace, he saw a fourth figure and that fourth figure was like a son of the gods. Commentators have wondered whether that is the way you should translate the Aramaic expression. It could be rendered like the Son of God. Now, it is, of course, the opinion of the translators in this case that it is unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar would know the meaning of the term the Son of God, and so they have rendered it based upon their idea of what Nebuchadnezzar would have thought. And perhaps they are right. I would not want to deny that this should be rendered like a son of the gods.

But it seems plain that as you read this, it is clear that this is a reference to an angelic or supernatural being, and while it is possible that it was an angel and

Nebuchadnezzar responded that way, it also, to me, is more likely that it is a reference to the Son of God and as another of the theophanies of the word of God, of which, there are many up to this point in the revelation in the word of God.

We have the appearance of our Lord or the Theophany of our Lord in the Garden of Eden. When Enoch walked with God, he walked with our Lord Jesus Christ most likely. Because, no one is able to look upon the Father and see his essence. It is only the Son who has bodily formed and so consequently, it was probably our Lord Jesus Christ with whom Enoch walked. We know that Hagar was interrupted or stopped by the angel of the Lord and we saw in a recent study in the Book of Genesis on Sunday morning that the text went on to call this angel of the Lord, God in the same context. We will see in the 18th chapter in the Book of the Genesis, the Lord willing, a couple of Sundays, not this coming Sunday but the following Sunday. Abraham; likewise, had an experience with a theophany. Jacob wrestles with our Lord Jesus Christ, the angel. And it is clear from the passage that he recognizes that he has wrestled with the Lord Jesus Christ himself and so on through the Bible. So here evidently, this was a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in verse 27 we read that, as someone has put it, they passed the smoke test. They did not even smell like they had been in fire. No fire sails on their clothing, and it was in order to prevent any possibility of someone saying, "Well, it was some kind of Jewish trick that was played."

The last section, verses 28 through 30, records the exaltation of the Jews. We read, Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants and who put their trust in him, violating the king's command and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own god. Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," -- he was not totally a dummkopf -- "shall be torn limb from limb." He

has a really a happy way [laughter] of thinking up devices by which he can get rid of people. Fiery furnace heated seven times hotter and now something that will tear them limb from limb. Their houses reduced to rubbish heap inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.

Now, this is the same man who has said back in verse 15, "And what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" But now there is no God who can deliver like this God. He, at least, has learned one new facet about the God the Hebrews worship. He has learned that he is a God who reveals secrets and he is also a God who delivers people from the burning fiery furnace.

Well, let me close by simply pointing out a few important practical lessons. First of all, it is clear that we have here again another illustration of the continuing complete care of our Lord in the midst of all of the experiences through which we have to go through. And then we learned the blessedness of some of the trials that God puts us through. That is a very hard lesson to learn and no one wants to engage in the learning of it. I am sure that if the Lord were to suggest that on Believer's Bible Institute night we have a 5th class and entitle it, "Learning Fiery Trials," that there would not be too many who would elect that particular class. Not any of us want to go through any fiery trials, but James, remember, says, "Count in all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." And we learned a great deal about the god whom we worship by the experiences of the trials through which he puts us, and then of course the triumph of faith produced by the word of God.

Let me close with a story about Athanasius. Athanasius was an early bishop of Alexandria who stoutly opposed the teaching of Arius. Many of you who have taken history of Christian doctrine know of the struggles with Arianism that took place in the early church. Athanasius is regarded as the outstanding figure who stood against the heresy of the Arians, which was a denial of the full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, suggesting that he was not an eternal son of God but a son of God who had a beginning.

And so Athanasius was hounded through five exiles for his faith and the full deity of Jesus Christ. He was finally summoned before Emperor Theodosius who demanded that he cease his opposition to the teaching of Arius. Athanasius firmly refused where upon the Emperor reproved him and sternly asked, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" And Athanasius is supposed to have replied, "Then I am against the world." But when we are against the world, we are with the Lord. And that after all is what really matters, is it not? Let's bow together in the word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these lessons that come from the prophecy of Daniel. We thank Thee for the historical lessons and for the principles that emerged from this great story. We thank Thee for these men who studied the revelation of God and came to a faith that enabled them to triumph and be illustrations for us, who pass through similar trials.

And we thank Thee too Lord for the adumbrations of the future that we find even in these Old Testament incidents, reminding us again of the inspiration of holy Scripture and that even historical sections may be illustrative of the future when the beast shall demand that an image be set up in the temple by the false prophet. The false prophet shall call upon all men to worship the image of the Beast who has made himself out to be God.

And we thank Thee that in those days there will be a Remnant, that will not bow the knee to Baal or worship the image and who will be martyred for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us Lord something of the spirit of those who are willing to stand for the Truth of God in spite of all that the world may seek to do to us.

And deliver us from those things in the world that are very deceptive, the things that occasionally deceive us. We find ourselves serving principles contrary to the truth of God. Help us Lord in 1979 to be those who truly submit to the word of God. Bless in the hour that follows.

“The Golden Image, the Fiery Furnace and the Son of God” by S. Lewis Johnson
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For Jesus’ sake. Amen.