



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

THE TEST OF CONVICTION AND FAITHFULNESS Daniel 3:1-18

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.” He commanded that everyone should **“fall down and worship the golden image”**. He threatened that **“whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”** He asked the worshippers of the true God: **“And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”** (verses 1,5,6,15). Despite his great testimony and public affirmation of the true God at the end of the second chapter (Daniel 2:47-49) he was still a sinner, an idolatrous sinner, a proud sinner, a great sinner, a blasphemous sinner, an open and flagrant sinner, a cruel and wicked sinner, an unashamed, unpretending sinner. Public testimonies only go so far, but often, not far enough to reveal genuine conversion. True believers must not be deceived and we must not take every public confession of Christ as an unmistakable sign of genuine conversion. There are many who **“have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof”**, many who **“profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”** There are many who claim to **“believe in His Name”**, but Jesus will **“not commit Himself unto them, because He knows what is in man.”** Many, indeed, have **“a name that thou livest, and art dead.”** **“They feared the LORD, and served their own gods... Unto this day they do after the former manners”**. Many of these religious sinners will deceive themselves and also deceive others until the final day of reckoning, saying **“Lord, Lord”** but Christ will profess unto them, **“I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity”** (2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16; John 2:23-25; Revelation 3:2; 2 Kings 17:33,34; Matthew 7:21-23). Nebuchadnezzar’s earlier emotional public declaration was superficial. Most Christians would have been deceived by such declarations and testimonies today. We must be watchful and **“try the spirits whether they are of God”** lest we fill the church with hypocritical, idolatrous sinners.

THE COMMANDMENTS THAT CONDEMN IDOLATRY

Daniel 3:1-3; Exodus 20:1-5,23; Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:29-32; Hosea 8:3-6; Habakkuk 2:18-20; Matthew 4:8-10; Acts 15:28,29;17:29-31; Romans 1:21-28,32; Revelation 9:20,21; 21:8.

Idolatry is consistently and severely condemned in the Word of God. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament condemn it. It is an abomination to God and all unrepentant idol worshippers will be punished in the eternal lake of fire for ever. Idolatry is vain and foolish, unprofitable and defiling. Idolatry is substituting anything or anyone for the true God, worshipping something or someone instead of the only true and living God. Taking the whole Biblical revelation into consideration, idolatry consists of: making images to represent God, bowing down to and worshipping images, sacrificing to idols and devils, serving, worshipping, swearing by, fearing, speaking in the name of other gods, worshipping angels, worshipping the hosts of heaven, worshipping devils, worshipping dead men and enquiring from spirits of dead men. These forms of idolatry can be noticed through their outward or external activities of worship but idolatry may be internal, too. There are men who **“set up their idols in their heart”** (Ezekiel 14:3). This internal form of idolatry, loving anything - money, men or material things - above God, is severely condemned by God and will be judged by God as severely as all other forms of idolatry. **“the love of money is the root of all evil”** and **“covetousness, which is idolatry”** makes **“the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience”** (1 Timothy 6:10; Colossians 3:5,6).

Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold and commanded all the citizens of Babylon and the captives from Judah to worship the image. He was king, ruler and benefactor. He had trained, employed and promoted some of the Jews. He had provided them some material resources; now he wanted to bring them and every one else under the control of a unifying, idolatrous state religion. Rulers, employers and political leaders who give us jobs sometimes also offer us their idolatrous or occultic religion. We must know where to draw the line. We work and make our daily living under an employer without ever bringing our souls into the bondage of idolatry or occultism.

THE CALL AND COERCION TO WORSHIP AN IDOL

Daniel 3:4-14; Esther 3:2-6; 2 Chronicles 21:10,11; Acts 26:11; Daniel 6:6-9,13; Revelation 13:4-8,16-18; 1 Peter 4:3,4; Revelation 12:11; Matthew 10:18-22; Luke 21:12-19; Acts 4:18-20; Psalm 15:4.

Like most men, idolatrous and occultic men, Nebuchadnezzar was not content to worship his idol alone, he must have others worship with him and share in his condemnation. If they would not fall down and worship the golden image voluntarily, he must coerce, threaten and compel them to sin! Nebuchadnezzar's punishment for not worshipping his idol was severe but God's judgment for worshipping idols is eternally and infinitely more severe. His threatened punishment for refusal to worship his idol is temporary suffering. **"And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace"** (Daniel 3:6). God's judgment for worshipping idols is infinitely greater. **"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the ABOMINABLE, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and IDOLATERS, and all liars, shall have their part in the LAKE WHICH BURNETH WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE". "AND SHALL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOR EVER AND EVER "** (Revelation 21:8; 19:20; 20:10; 14:9-11).

"And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:6). This was not an empty threat but a very serious realizable threat. Idol worshippers did not put much value on human life. They could even throw their own children into the fire to sacrifice to their gods. **"They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with THEIR IDOLS have they committed adultery, and HAVE CAUSED THEIR SONS, whom they bare unto Me, to PASS FOR THEM THROUGH THE FIRE, TO DEVOUR THEM "** (Ezekiel 23:37; see also 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 2 Chronicles 33:6). Those who did not feel any restraint or pain in throwing their own children into the fire would not find it difficult casting those who refuse their idolatry into the burning fiery furnace. Moreover Nebuchadnezzar was well known for his cruelty and brutality in dealing with rebels. Even today, there are idolaters, occultists and false, fanatical religionists who would rather have someone die than see them live not worshipping their false gods with them.

The threat was to force and compel everyone to sin against God through idol worship. Three believers, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego remained uncompromising. Some cowardly conspirators reported them to the king. The king was furious and in his rage he repeated and re-emphasized his threat, but these three committed believers stood their ground. The greater the rage of the king, the greater the resolve of these godly men.

THE COURAGE OF CONVICTION AGAINST IDOLATRY

Daniel 3:15-18; Psalm 27:1-3; Isaiah 51:12,13; 54:14,17; Jeremiah 15:20,21; Matthew 10:28-33; Luke 12:3-9; Acts 20:22-24; Romans 8:31-39; Revelation 2:10,25-29.

The situation was intimidating; the king was in a rage, angry and furious; the Chaldeans were indignant, the accusers were bitter, other Jews already had bowed and worshipped, the multitudes were watching, yet these three uncompromising non-conformists were unshakable in their conviction. Without inner strength and internal principle, external pressure can crush our will. Those who have lost real christian conviction and an internal principle of righteousness are easily intimidated. They bow to pressure in order to avoid burning in the furnace. For these three conquerors, great was their affirmation of faith in God. They were absolutely committed to the pure worship of the true and living God. They accepted God's will even if it meant death. They were resolved, if need be, to die for God's holy cause. They had decided to worship God and to worship no other god; they had known the truth and made up their minds to live for the truth and to die for the truth. Neither the promise nor the punishment of the king was going to change their mind. The pressure was great but their purpose of heart was greater. The demand was irreversible and their decision was irrevocable. They conquered the unrighteous demand with their unhesitating determination. They were resolved to suffer rather than sin and leave the outcome in God's hands. The courage of conviction will always result in God's glory and be rewarded by God.

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