

The Idols of Babylon

Daniel 3

OPENING: As you find your place in Daniel 3, let me set the stage by explaining a couple of mega themes in scripture.

1. We were created to WORSHIP God

The default setting of the human heart is worship.

Psychologists call it the “Religious Instinct”.

As **Sociologist Talcott Parsons** explained, *“There is no known human society without something which modern social scientist would classify as religion”*.

If you took a tribe of humans from their mother’s womb and separated them from all outside influence and just observed - you would discover that they have an innate desire to set up something to worship. Why? Because it is hard wired into how God made you - you were built for worship.

Matthew 22:35–40 (NASB95)

³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Notice that Jesus didn’t say, “Well you foolish man, they are all the same:.. Jesus says that one particular command carries the **greatest weight**, and we might assume that because it is the greatest command, **to break the greatest command is to commit the greatest sin.**

³⁷ And He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment.

- The term **WORSHIP** is derived from the Old English word meaning, “worth - ship”. It is an attribution of worth or value.
- We commonly speak of worship in conjunction with the word, “**PRAISE**”. Which is where we get our word appraisal, which means to attribute value to something.

So we show our devotion, value or love for God through worship. We value Him, His Word, His presence above all else.

2. Satan’s primary goal is to misdirect our worship from God to Idols.

So he cannot make you stop worshipping (that's hardwired) so he has to redirect your worship.

He desires to get you to love, value, and worship anything but God. Thus breaking the greatest command, thereby committing the greatest sin. **This greatest sin is called, "Idolatry".**

The most repeated command is this, "have no other gods before me". Also forbidding idolatry.

EXAMPLE: In the garden Satan tempted Adam to value his word more than God's Word.

So idolatry isn't always bowing down to a statue, but it's when anything takes a place of greater prominence in our lives than God.

I Corinthians 10:19-20, Paul tells us that behind idols is a **demon**. A legitimate personality, a fallen angel, a follower of Satan.

So demons are willing to work through anyone or anything to convert them into an idol, thus misdirect your worship.

Any time you are willing to obey someone or something more than Christ you are being seduced by the enemy and you are a practicing Idolater.

Colossians 3:5 (NASB95)

⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, **which amounts to idolatry.**

- Sexual Sin = Idolatry

ILLUSTRATION: Jesus says wait for marriage, your boyfriend says, "If you love me you would". If you obey your boyfriend rather than Jesus you are committing Idolatry and worshipping your boyfriend. You see?

The Romans had:

- VENUS the goddess of Sex and Lust
- DISPATAR (GR. PLUTO) the god of wealth
- BACCHUS the god of drunkenness
- APOLLO the god of music
- FAMA the goddess of fame.
- JUVENTAS the goddess of youth

These were all demons who hid behind idol and sought to misdirect worship.

Nothing has changed - Venus still seeks to get you to value sex more than Christ, Dispatar seeks to get you to worship wealth more than Christ. You see?

In Today's text we are going to see how the Spirit of Babylon forces the believer to pick a team - who will you worship.

Now notice how this story serves as a Prototype of every other form fo Idolatry.

1. A Counterfeit God

TEXT: Daniel 3:1–30 (ESV)

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Remember last week, how God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream and said an inferior Kingdom would one day over through Babylon. Rather than honor the decree of God Nebuchadnezzar says, "We will see about that". So he makes ANOTHER statue that competes with the revelation of God, this one is not Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron - it is ENTIRELY gold.

As if to say, "I Nebuchadnezzar will be the eternal King, not Christ, the stone from Heaven".

2. A Counterfeit Preacher

⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages.

Satan calls and equips counterfeit Pastors and Evangelists to champion the cause of his Idol. They will be on the covers of magazines, they will have huge followings.

3. A Counterfeit Church

⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, **O peoples, nations, and languages.**

The Church is a mixed multitude of every tribe and tongue worshipping and serving the one true God. But Satan continually produces a counterfeit church.

He will offer you the same things you get from the True Church, guidance for life, fellowship, a team to do good, a community of people to unite with.

4. A Counterfeit Worship Service

⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

5. A Counterfeit Hell

⁶ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”

NOW - in this passage all of these things are blatant and clear. Chances are they will NOT be so straightforward in your life. If you are to avoid falling into Idolatry you must learn to ask HARD QUESTIONS.

QUESTIONS:

- Is this person or thing asking me to obey them rather than Jesus?
- Is this person or things asking me to listen to their word faithfully, regularly, with the sort of allegiance I only owe to the one true God?
- Is this person or thing becoming a competition with Church where I am regularly having to miss the gathering of the saints in order to be a part?
- Do I find myself expressing worth, or worship to this person or thing that belongs only to my Creator?
- Do I fear the punishment of this person or thing if I do not comply?

For the Demonic Idol of Popularity

- A person will sacrifice and buy clothes they can't afford and often don't even like in order to fit in... that's their tithe.
- They will find the one supremely popular person and take his or her advice as to how they should act or think... that their preacher.
- They will miss youth group if the popular crowd has competing plans. why? That's their church.
- Just as a Christian may wear a cross, or a Muslim a Crescent, They will wear symbols, brands, that express their loyalty to the god of popularity. If the parent will not provide such brand name items, a passion that can seldom be found amongst the most passionate worship is expressed.
- Why? Because they do not want to suffer the wrath and be cast into Popularity Hell - which means you have to sit at a table with the unpopular kids.

Parents it is easy to see other people's idols... but what about yours?

The Demonic Idol of Homemaking

- Do you miss your quiet time but never miss an episode of fixer upper?
- Do you stop everything if the great high priestess Martha Stewart is speaking ex cathedra?
- Do you spend money you don't have to make your home impressive to your fellow worshippers?

- Do you make pilgrimages to Waco, TX so that you can stand in the presence of the Silo.
- Do you look down on others who do not heed the Laws of your religion, and mix stripes with polka dots?
- Do you live in fear of homemaking hell, which means someone may show up unexpectedly and see your sanctuary in disarray?

Martin Luther - "The human heart has the remarkable ability to turn anything into an idol."

Well Look what happened:

⁷ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹ They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Nothing will make you stand out more than the simple fact that you don't worship the cultural idols that everyone else is bowing down to.

You want to rebel, you want to buck the system? Be a Christian and refuse to bow to what everyone else bows to.

Refuse to dress provocatively because it's the Law of Girl Instagram.

Refuse to curse and cuss because it's the Law of the Lockerroom.

Refuse to walk around inebriated even though it's the law of your golfing buddies.

Refuse to gossip even though it's the law of the beauty shop.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember back in the day preaching at Student camps and conferences and kids would get so fired up they were ready to charge hell with a water pistol. Some bright student Pastor would get them around a camp fire and tell them to take a twig and let it symbolize your old life and everybody through it in the fire together. Twigs would be flying everywhere... but listen carefully Christian commitment is not found in tossing a twig into a camp fire. It is found when someone hears a raunchy story in the lunch room and leaves the table because they are tired of the foolishness.

Christian commitment is found in what you won't do.

The early church didn't suffer for worshipping Jesus, they suffered for NOT worshipping Caesar.

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage...

Sometimes one of the best giveaways that you are worshipping a demonic idol is undue anger when someone offends your idol.

What do you get unreasonably upset about? That's your idol.

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?"

¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Wow - there are people who know very little about scripture but they know this story. Why? Because there is something in the human heart that respects when someone stands up for what they believe in.

Everybody knows the story of the Alamo where Col. William Travis drew a line in the sand and said, we all may die but we will not give an inch. Now parenthetically I've never understood why folks in TX are so proud about that, most of the people there were from TN, AL, and KY. Davy Crockett is from my neck of the woods.

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated.

²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were

thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, **"Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?"** They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, **"But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."**

Our God has a flair for the dramatic... I think about the old song, and then along came jones. Just in the Nic of time. When it looks like its all over... behold there stands a forth man, one like unto the Son of God.

It is the common practice of the Almighty NOT to intervene until your conviction has been placed on full display.

This way no one could deny that this was and act of the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: 2012 was a rough year. Our senior adult Pastor died suddenly, our student Pastor was called to another church, our worship Pastor lost his ministry and family over immorality. My father became sick and had to move in with our family. In the midst of it all there was a tremendous theological argument developed in our church. It was in keeping with our church's statement of faith, it was true to the scriptures. But it was a sore spot for some of the members. Keep in mind the church had tripled in size in a couple of years.

I had a moment where I felt like it was all falling apart. I remember walking in my back yard one Friday night and saying, "God if you can hear me and if I'm on the right track, would you give me some sort of a sign???" I've never done that in my life before or since. I don't believe in asking for signs... but that night I needed one. I was out there for a couple hours. Nothing happened.

I walked in and told Julie, I told her how nothing happened... she said, "what are you going to do?" I said, "all I know to do - preach the word".

I got up that Sunday, mad at God, disappointed, confused, but I loaded my notes in my bible and started to church determined to preached the truth no matter what.

I was literally a mile and a half from the church when my phone beeped with a message. I could tell it was a very long text message so I pulled over to read it.

It was from one of the Deacons in our Church. Now, some people are more charismatic than other, they get a word from God about every 10 mins. This man was about as Charismatic as a Rock. He told me that on Friday night, around the time when I was praying in my back yard. God woke him up. With his room filled

with light and the words written on his wall - "Follow Zach, He is following Jesus". He said, "Pastor, I sat up and prayed for you all night.... I just want you to know that I've got your back".

Now think of the wisdom of what God did.... He taught me that I'm not to live by or for signs and wonders, I'm got live by conviction... but he also taught me that creating one was very simple for him... and he did it in the Nik of time.