

The Mystery Of Iniquity: Self Worship, The Heart of Idolatry Daniel Chapter Three, Part Two

In this study we are going to closely examine the parallels between Nebuchadnezzar's image on the plains of Dura and the final decree enforcing worship, as revealed in Revelation. What does this have to do with us, our present lives and our eternal destiny? The sole purpose of the plan of redemption is to redeem us from sin, that is, the harmful transgression of the vast and perfect systems of cause and effect, the perfect laws that govern the universe as God irrevocably established them.

Iniquity began with trusting self more than trusting God, first with Lucifer, then with Eve and subsequently with every one of us. It took great courage for Daniel's three friends to defy obeying Nebuchadnezzar in favor of trusting and obeying God. If Revelation describes the ultimate test of such loyalty then it behooves us to explore whether we too trust our own mortal wisdom more than that of our Creator. Who we most trust defines who we worship. To trust in anything other than God, especially ourselves, is by definition idolatry.

Idolaters are condemned by the Word of God. Their folly consists in trusting in self for salvation, in bowing down to the works of their own hands. God classes as idolaters those who trust in their own wisdom, their own devising, depending for success on their riches and power, striving to strengthen themselves by alliance with men whom the world calls great, but who fail to discern the binding claims of His law.

When mother says, "No," the toddler asks "Why?" So do we ask of God, "Why not transgress your commandments? Why not experiment with cause and effect outside of Your counsel? Didn't you give us freedom of choice?" The most universal and core understanding of love is that it purely intends to bless, not harm. The Bible declares that God is love. Could it be that because God gave us the liberating power of choice, He loved us enough to also give us divine instruction on how to exercise that power to bless, not harm ourselves and others?

For example, does a loving Father give his teenager the power of choice to drive the car without first instructing him how to drive and revealing to him the potential harm that could come to him or others? Wisdom regarding how to drive is useless without the freedom to drive, but the freedom to drive without instruction causes harm. Wisdom without the power to choose is useless. The power to choose without wisdom is harmful. In love, God has given us both freedom of choice and wise instruction, but our human inclination is to desire the freedom without trusting the Instructor.

The foundation of the kingdom of God is His governing law. The foundation of His law is love. The foundation of love is choice.

The foundation of the kingdom of Satan is his governing law. The foundation of his law is force and coercion, taking away choice.

In the beginning Satan, Lucifer, desired freedom without trusting the Divine Instructor. His desire was to rule the universe receiving the worship due only the Creator. Trusting in his own wisdom, he believed his governing principles to be superior to God's. What a mystery! The mystery of iniquity! Not content with being nearest the throne, the highest ranking angel endowed with beauty and talent, perfect in all his ways, he coveted the throne!

Ezekiel 28:14,15 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15) Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

Isaiah 14:12-14 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13) For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Revelation gives us an account of this battle between the two kingdoms. Satan has made the earth his home and has applied his deceptive ways trying to convince us of the superiority of his kingdom principles.

Revelation 12:7-9 And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8) And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9) And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

We read of his first successful account of deception in the Garden of Eden. He suggested to Eve that she could trust her own wisdom and decide for herself the laws governing good and evil. He suggested that God was not giving her freedom and was preventing her from knowledge that would immortalize her.

Genesis 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2) And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4) And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5) For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Just what was so subtle about Satan's argument? After all, Satan was upholding Eve's freedom of choice, a power with which God had endowed her, but he challenged the wisdom of God's counsel. He appealed to freedom at the peril of disregarding God's warning. He insinuated God's counsel was selfishly restrictive, not protective. Little could Eve's limited knowledge comprehend the aftereffects—fear of God, shame of nakedness, accusing spirits, and the reproduction of self-dependence and accusation in their first offspring, culminating in murder and the downward spiral of humanity.

But God had lovingly given Adam and Eve freedom of choice. By creating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He provided an opportunity to choose to trust or distrust Him, to obey or disobey Him. He also gave them instruction regarding the consequences should they choose not to believe Him. We know what their decision was and we too are experiencing the consequences of their choice and ours. Once again, we see the spirit of covetousness. Eve was not content eating of all the trees of the garden, but coveted the one which God had commanded not to eat of.

Once they had made their choice and had sinned, they continued manifesting the mystery of iniquity, self trust, self dependance, self salvation. They made fig leaves attempting to deal with their sin.

Genesis 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

God, knowing that they could not save themselves, provided a means by which they could be saved from their terrible, hopeless condition. Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain, would come refuting the lies of Satan, revealing the truth of the nature of God and the nature of iniquity, thereby giving us reason to come back to a trusting relationship with our Creator. God does indeed love us and can be trusted, and sin does not give us life but leads to death.

Genesis 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The firstborn of Adam and Eve was infected with this same mystery of iniquity. Cain manifested trust in his own wisdom believing that salvation could come another way other than through the sacrifice of Christ. Abel revealed his trust in the Saviour to come, as represented by his blood offering.

Genesis 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4) And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering; 5) But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell.

1 John 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

The lack of trust in God's warnings caused all but eight of the inhabitants of the whole earth to meet with the consequences of their choice. The world was destroyed by the flood. Shortly thereafter, God promised that there would never be another flood, but again we find the mystery of iniquity infecting most of mankind. At the tower of Babel, distrust in the promise of God was manifested and they built a tower to save themselves should another flood occur. This revealed the same rebellion against the word of God as had been manifested before.

Although many more examples could be given, we will now look at the rebellion of Babylon, which found its origin at the rebellion at the tower of Babel. In Daniel 2 we find God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a dream which revealed that one day the earthly kingdoms reproducing Satan's principles of government with increasing intensity would be replaced by the everlasting kingdom of God.

Daniel chapter three records Nebuchadnezzar's rebellion against the prediction of the fall of his kingdom as well as those following. He made an image representing himself and his perpetual kingdom. He incorporated Satan's principles of force and decreed that all should worship this image or be killed. This rebellion perfectly typifies the the mystery of iniquity, the rebellion of Satan who exalted himself above God.

Revelation speaks of another Babylon in rebellion against God and the principles of His kingdom. This Babylon is not the literal Babylon for it no longer exists, but is now to be understood as a spiritual, worldwide, end time rebellion against God and His government. Notice the words, " MYSTERY,

BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Revelation 17:1-5 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2) With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3) So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4) And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5) And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

What are her abominations? The Old Testament gives us some insight as to what is classified as abominations.

Ezekiel 8:9,10 And He said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10) So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

In the commandments we find the Lord instructing us against idolatry. The house of bondage typifies slavery to the sin that so easily besets us. Here God is promising to free us from sin and the consequences that follow, for us as well as for our children.

Exodus 20:1-6 And God spake all these words, saying, 2) I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3) Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6) And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

God knows that there is no god that can save us, including ourselves, and His jealousy is for our salvation.

Hosea 13:4 Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

This “knowing” represents a union, becoming one with Christ in spirit. Adam knew his wife and she conceived. Here is another mystery! When we know Christ, there will be a new creature, a born again experience, a miracle birth of unselfish love.

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Do we know Christ? Do we have His self-sacrificing love? Do we say “Lord, Lord ...?”

Matthew 7:22,23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

When this union takes place, we will be married to Christ, take His name and live as one with Him in spirit and in truth. The third commandment speaks of taking His name, the name Christian.

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

When we have this life saving intimate relationship with our Maker, it will be not only a duty but a privilege to be His witnesses of this everlasting gospel which shall be revealed in all the world. The selfless principles of His eternal kingdom will be manifested in our lives as a witness to those who have been so deceived by Satan.

Isaiah 43:10, 11 Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour.

Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Why will He not hold us guiltless that taketh His name in vain? It reveals we lack the Love than only is worthy of immortality. The misrepresentation of His character has caused many to turn away from God and His salvation. Again, His focus is not on Himself but on saving others. Satan misrepresented God in Heaven as well as in the Garden. Nebuchadnezzar also misrepresented the principles God holds so dear by removing choice and demanding worship and that at the threat of death. Does modern day Babylon also misrepresent God and His kingdom principles? Will they enforce worship? We will discover this to be so. Have many turned away from God due to this misrepresentation? Indeed. We are told that the whole world will wonder after this power!

The next commandment is to remember the Sabbath. Does this commandment have anything to do with the intimate relationship where we have united with Christ and taken His name? God said the Sabbath is a sign. It is a witness of the union of Christ and His people. The keeping of the Sabbath represents a restful, trusting, obedient relationship. We understand that His laws are protective and not arbitrary. We have seen the Revelation of Christ and we have embraced Him along with the principles of His kingdom.

Exodus 20:4 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. . .

The Sabbath is a sign, a memorial of His creative power.

Exodus 20:4 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. . .

Exodus 31:17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.

Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2) And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3) And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

The word rest translates the same as Sabbath.

Hebrew rest #7673. *tbv shabath shaw-bath'*; a primitive root; to repose, i.e. desist from exertion; used in many implied relations (causative, figurative or specific):-- (cause to, let, make to) cease, celebrate, cause (make) to fail, keep (sabbath), suffer to be lacking, leave, put away (down), (make to) rest, rid, still, take away.

Hebrew sabbath #7676. *tbv shabbath shab-bawth'*; intensive from 07673; intermission, i.e. (specifically) the Sabbath:-- (+ every) sabbath. Greek 4521.

This is the one commandment that identifies the true God. He is the only one who is worthy of worship.

Revelation 4:10, 11 The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The everlasting gospel will call all of God's people to come out of Babylon, the system of false worship, and worship the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth.

Revelation 14:6-8 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7) Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Revelation 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Revelation 18:1-4 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2) And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3) For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4)

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Those who do not understand His laws of Love and have not entered into the resting, trusting relationship with Christ, have no rest day nor night and will receive the plagues.

Revelation 14:9-11 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10) The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11) And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The Sabbath is a sign, a memorial of His covenant promise to sanctify us, to save us from sin, signifying His creative power to recreate us in His image.

Exodus 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

Deuteronomy 5:15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

Ezekiel 20:12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

Christ invited us to enter into His rest.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Greek rest #373. anapauw anapauo an-ap-ow'-o; from 303 and 3973; (reflexively) to repose (literally or figuratively [be exempt], remain); by implication, to refresh:-- take ease, refresh, (give, take) rest.

Hebrews 4:10 For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

Greek rest #2663. katapausiv katapausis kat-ap'-ow-sis; from 2664; reposing down, i.e. (by Hebraism) abode:-- rest.

What works are they resting from? Idolatry, that is, self dependence, self reliance, trusting in one's own wisdom, none of which can replace the restful sanctification of Christ's abiding in us. To trust in self wrought character perfection is effectively trusting in self for salvation.

When God perfects it is always His creative power. Notice the three occasions when the Bible says Christ has or will complete a perfect work, always followed by Sabbath rest.

When Christ finished the work of creation He rested on the Sabbath from His work. When Christ, through Love, finished the recreative work of overcoming sin in the likeness of sinful flesh, He rested on the Sabbath in the tomb.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The law is not weak for Paul tells us that,

Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Nothing wrong with the law, it is the flesh that is weak in that it cannot keep the law without union with Christ, for with Christ, all things are possible.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

When Christ fulfills the finishing of His final work, performing the recreation of His character in His people, there will be another Sabbath, the millennial rest.

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

Jude 24 Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25) To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

The rebellious, distrusting children of Israel in the wilderness who were not allowed to enter the earthly Canaan, but who perished in the wilderness, typifies the rebellious, distrusting wicked at the end of earth's history who will not enter the Heavenly Canaan, but who will perish as well. And how were they rebellious and distrusting?

Hebrews 3:7-11 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice, 8) Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9) When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10) Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11) So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Hebrews 3:12-19 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14) For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; 15) While it is said, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16) For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17) But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18) And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? 19) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Ezekiel 20:12-16 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. 13) But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14) But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15) Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 16) Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

Hebrews 4:2-11 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3) For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4) For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. 5) And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. 6) Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of

unbelief: 7) Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. 8) For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9) There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10) For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. 11) Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

For every powerful truth God desires that man comprehend, Satan manufactures a counterfeit to divert man from God's liberating Truth. Accordingly God blessed, hallowed and sanctified the day that marked Him as the sanctifying God who completed the perfect work of creation and, if man were to sin, the only One who could recreate a sinless character again in man. Hoping to protect all generations of man from counterfeit worship that would lead to sin, God urged that parents teach their children His laws.

Not long after the death of the Lord of the Sabbath, Satan introduced into the Christian church the pagan counterfeit, the idol Sabbath day which is the mark of Satan's authority. Paul describes the antichrist, the representative of Satan.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:

It has been suggested that as long as one worship any day in seven, it could be reclassified as the Sabbath. If this were true, then Adam and Eve could have, without distrusting God, chosen any other tree not to eat from than that which God had specifically identified. They were not so rebellious as to appoint another tree. They simply did not keep God's explicit direction regarding the tree He had appointed, exalting their wisdom above His.

Adam and Eve could not comprehend the full effect of disobeying God's test of their trust in His perfect wisdom. What will we do when tested with worship of the idol Sabbath?