

The Mystery Of Iniquity:

Daniel Chapter Three, Part One

Introduction:

In order to understand the issues at stake in the battle between Christ and antichrist, we need to go back to the beginning where Christ warned us regarding Satan's battle plan against the saints, as well as assuring us of the promised end of the serpent, "that old serpent called the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9).

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.

There are two mysteries in the Scriptures, the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness. We will first examine the origin of the mystery of iniquity where Satan exercised his liberty to oppose God's kingdom principles and to sin. The Scripture defines it as "war in Heaven" (Revelation 12:7). Although Satan was the most magnificent creature God had created, he was not content with who he was and the beauty and talent that were created in him. He coveted the throne and the worship that is only due the Creator. This truly is a mystery. He was the first one guilty of worshipping the "creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).

The mystery of iniquity:

Ezekiel 28:12b Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13) Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14) 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.

Jude 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left . . .

After Satan left Heaven, his battle plan to replace God and gain the worship, began in Eden with his tempting Eve with the same sins which he originated. God had said, "Of all the trees of the garden ye may freely eat" But Eve coveted the one and only forbidden tree. Satan suggested that if she ate of the fruit, she could become a god. She need not "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

Not only is the battle between Christ and antichrist, but it is a battle between their two seeds, the seed of Christ, and the seed of Satan. John revealed in his day that "even now are there many antichrists"; and that "there is a *spirit* of antichrist, . . . and even now already is it in the world" (1John 2:18).

Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, characterized of the antichrist of our day, the final seed of Satan.

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Thessalonians 2:9

Paul also understood that the *spirit* of antichrist existed in his day.

2Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

Paul understood as well, that there would be an end to “the mystery of iniquity”.

2Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming:

As we compare the image that Daniel set up in the plains of Dura in Babylon, and the image that is worshipped in Revelation 13, the *spirit* of antichrist will be revealed by the principles by which he chooses to rule his kingdom, that is by self exaltation and force.

The mystery of godliness:

Let's now focus on the mystery of godliness which is the exact opposite of Satan's. God's kingdom principles of humility and liberty will be revealed by the way He deals with the rebellion in His universe.

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery [a thing to be coveted] to be equal with God: 7) But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8) And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Luke 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

God could have easily destroyed Satan at the very beginning of his rebellion. Actually, foreknowing Satan's rebellion, He could have decided not to create him in the first place. However, because He is a God of freewill, and having full confidence in His principles of governing the universe, He allowed Satan to manifest his own kingdom principles in contrast to His. Thus, the whole universe will be totally convinced of whose kingdom principles should win in the end. “Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess” (Romans 14:11), “just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3b), “for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Revelation 15:4).

1Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Romans 16:25 Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Colossians 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: 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:

The ultimate goal of the gospel is to restore to us the face to face communion Adam and Eve experienced with the Lord in the garden of Eden. The only way this is to happen is if we allow His Spirit to dwell in us.

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. Whom we most trust defines whom 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 and 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.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6) In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

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

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

2Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

The foundation of the kingdom of Satan is his governing law. The foundation of his law is self exaltation and force, taking away choice instead of giving it. This truth will be demonstrated as we look at Nebuchadnezzar, a seed of Satan, and the principles by which he ruled.

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!

Self worship, the heart of idolatry:

Ezekiel 28:2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: ... 14) 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.

Examples in history of the mystery of iniquity:

Let's look at some key examples of how the rebellious mystery of iniquity against God and His governing principles has manifested.

The lack of trust in God's warnings caused all but eight of the inhabitants of the entire 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 at the tower of Babel we again find the mystery of iniquity infecting most of mankind.

At the tower of Babel, distrust in the promise of God that there would never again be a world wide flood, was manifested in Nimrod's leading his followers to build a tower to save themselves should another flood occur. This revealed the same rebellion against the word of God as had been manifested before. In fact one of the definitions of "before" in Genesis 10:9 "He was a mighty hunter before the LORD:" translates "against."

Although many more examples could be given, we will now look at the rebellion of Babylon, which found its origin in the rebellion at the tower of Babel. In Daniel 2 we find God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a dream which revealed that one day those earthly kingdoms reproducing Satan's principles of government with increasing intensity will 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 the fall of successive kingdoms. He made an image representing his would be a perpetual kingdom. He incorporated Satan's principles of self exaltation and force, decreeing that all should worship the image or be killed. This rebellion perfectly typifies the mystery of iniquity, the rebellion of Satan who exalted himself above God, desiring worship and using force or coercion to draw one third of the angels into rebellion.

Revelation speaks of another Babylon in rebellion against God and the principles of His kingdom. This Babylon is not the literal Babylon in Iraq for God correctly foretold it would never be rebuilt. Prophetic Babylon is now to be understood as a spiritual, worldwide, end time rebellion against God and His governing principles. Just as ancient Babylon combined religion and politics, prophecy foretells an end time illicit union between church and state misappropriating the free worship of God to Caesar's authority to dictate worship. God has not given Caesar the right to rule over the conscience of men, or to persecute them and destroy those who will not accept the confusing, false doctrines they promote, symbolized by the wine and her abominations.

Notice the words, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Revelation 17:1 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.

This institution must be a church because she is called a woman, and a woman in symbolic prophecy represents a church. Revelation speaks of a pure woman, as well as an adulteress woman.

Jeremiah 6:2 I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

Revelation 17:1 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:

Not only is she a woman, but she is called a whore and she is a mother with daughters who are also "harlots." She is a blasphemous church. Blasphemy is defined in Scripture as making thyself God and claiming to be able to forgive sins.

John 10:33 The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Mark 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

The Mother of Harlots commits fornication, the illicit union of church and state with the kings of the earth which ends in persecution and death of the saints. This union of church and state was symbolized by the iron and clay in the feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image of a man comprising multiple medals representing the four major kingdoms which interacted with Israel, God's church. Whenever you have the union of church and state, persecution of the faithful church follows.

Revelation 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

The final battle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, between Christ's seed and Satan's seed, will also emerge from a union of church and state that will result in persecution of the church.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 13:15 And he [state] had power to give life unto the image [church and state union] of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak [legislative laws], and cause [enforce] that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Parallels between Daniel three and Revelation chapters 13-15

1. In both we find “an image”
2. In both we find “666”
3. In both we find a decree enforcing worship
4. In both we find a death penalty
5. In both we find a deliverance
6. In both we find a minority hated
7. In both we find witnessing before courts & kings
8. In both we find the faith of Jesus displayed
9. In both we find the faithful keeping the commandments of God

A closer look at the parallels:

1. The image

Daniel 3:1a Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, . . .

Revelation 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

2. 666

Though they don't add up to 666 numerically, the statue's dimensions contain three six's. A score is 20 so three score is 60 cubits high. When breadth and depth were the same, it was the custom to supply only one measurement for both the breadth as well as the depth, thus you have 6 cubits wide and 6 cubits deep.

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Revelation 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Revelation 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

3. The decree enforcing worship

The word **worship** is found 11 times in Daniel chapter three. It is found eight times in Revelation 13 and 14. Do you think the issue may be over worship? If forced worship is the core violation of Christ's bride by “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” then what is the loyal choice we must make to obey God and not man?

Daniel 3:4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5) That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

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.

There is only one who is worthy of worship.

Revelation 4:11 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.

4. The death penalty

Daniel 3:6 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Revelation 13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

5. The deliverance

Daniel 3:22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23) And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25) He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Revelation 6:17 For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Revelation 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

Psalms 91:7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8) Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. 9) Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; 10) There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11) For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

6. The minority hated

Daniel 3:12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

7. The witness

Daniel 3:28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10) Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him (Satan, the accuser) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

8. The faith of Jesus

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17) If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18) But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

9. Keeping the commandments

The second commandment forbids making or worshipping idols.

Exodus 20:4 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;

Daniel 3:18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The issue of music in worship played a big part in preparing souls to “*fall down and worship the image.*” When something is repeated it is *being emphasized*. So it must be significant that four times in this chapter it mentions falling down and worshipping when ye hear the sound of the music. (Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15). Because of its powerful influence music plays a big role in the worship of the antichrist.

Daniel 3:4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5) That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut,

psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

Nebuchadnezzar makes another decree enforcing worship

Daniel 3:29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

It was good for Nebuchadnezzar to make public confession, and to exalt the God of heaven above all other gods; but in endeavoring to force his subjects to make a similar confession of faith and to show similar reverence, Nebuchadnezzar was exceeding his right as a temporal sovereign. He had no more right, either civil or moral, to threaten men with death for not worshiping God, than he had to make the decree consigning to the flames all who refused to worship the golden image. God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve.

Those who are willing to be taught, may learn a lesson from the conduct of the king of Babylon. As the enemy sought to make Nebuchadnezzar's God-given dream serve his own purposes by leading the king to work for his own glory instead of working for the glory of God, so he works today to pervert truth in order to hinder God's purposes. All false religion has its origin in a corruption of the true. When unmixed with evil, truth is a mighty power to save; but if we allow the enemy to work through us, if by the light given us we seek to exalt self, even this truth may become a power for evil.

The enemy would lead us all to use, as did Nebuchadnezzar, the light and knowledge of God for our own exaltation. But self-exaltation can find no place in the work of God.

Jeremiah 9:23 24 Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

The example of the three Hebrews is a type of the final generation who have taken up the cross of Christ—a self-sacrificing love unto death if necessary for the purpose of witnessing to the universe that the principles of God's kingdom are perfect and everlasting. The confident courage with which they faced death was borne of years of faithful obedience in the little things that taught them the faithfulness of God. Their faith was well-developed before the threat of death by which it was revealed.

Our trials are God's workman

Malachi 3:2 But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3) And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

2 Corinthians 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants. He sees that some have powers which may be used in the advancement of His work, and He puts these persons upon trial; in His providence He brings them into positions that test their character and reveal defects and weaknesses that have been hidden from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. He shows them their own weakness, and teaches them to lean upon Him; for He is their only help and safeguard.

Trial and persecution will come to all who, in obedience to the Word of God, refuse to worship the antichrist. Force is the last resort of every false religion. At first it tries attraction, as the king of Babylon tried the power of music and outward show. If these attractions, invented by men inspired by Satan, failed to make men worship the image, the hungry flames of the furnace were ready to consume them. So it will be in the final test.

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security. How could He assure that "affliction shall not rise up the second time"? (Nahum 1:9) He decided that **time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government.** He has done this through the nations who have adopted his principles. He had claimed that his were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by all.

Satan, who "was a murderer from the beginning," (John 8:44) destroys his enemies in an attempt to secure his government. If God like Lucifer were to secure His government by deadly force, why didn't He destroy Satan at the inception of sin? Is God like Nebuchadnezzar who decreed, worship me or I will throw you into that fiery furnace, or does He honor our liberty to worship freely?

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

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