

# Daniel

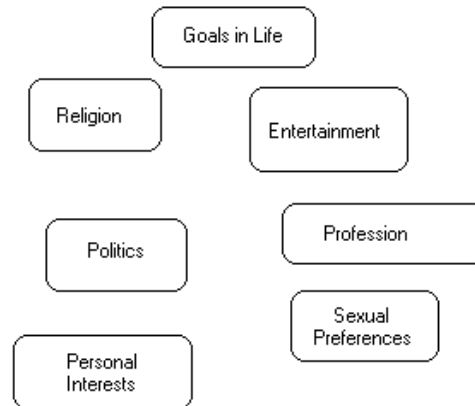
Leon L. Combs, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.

Originally written in 2014

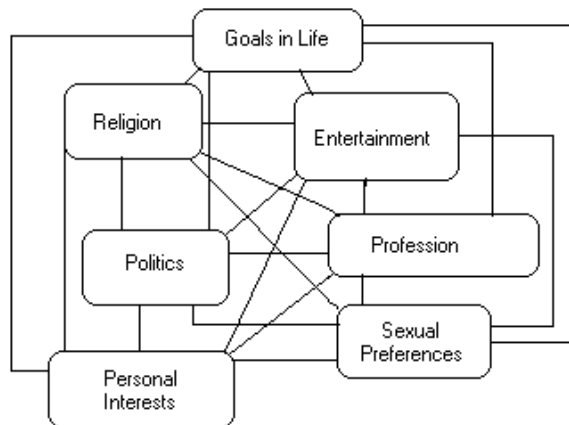
## Chapter Three

### Introduction

Why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this idol for worship after his confession as recorded in Dan 2:47: *"The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."* It may be that he was a supreme compartmentalist. Compartmentalization is the concept that a person can have many different internal attributes to his total being such as religious, political, sexual, scientific, professional, etc. and that none of them overlap. Such a situation is illustrated below.



The above is a depiction of a totally nonintegrated person, a person without integrity. An integrated person, or a person of integrity, would have all areas overlapping, or with connectivity lines indicated as in the figure below.



We hear people say that someone's personal life is his/her business and should not affect his/her political life or any other areas of his life. Does anyone really believe that compartmentalization is a practical reality? Can a person's worldview, which is shaped by all of the different aspects of his/her personality, really not affect job function? Does character really not matter in the job performance of a person? I presume that it is perfectly obvious that I don't believe that compartmentalization is a viable choice for living in the real world. What affects my moral choices also affects my daily performance in whatever task that I am doing. **Character really does matter!!!!**

These diagrams have only one religion entry but for someone who sees no problem in simultaneously worshiping several deities, we could make several religious units. King Nebuchadnezzar may have simultaneously respected Daniel's God and all other gods but desired that everyone show worship to this idol that represented a god that he worshiped. I believe that our understanding of God must be the fundamental concept in our world view that must affect all other aspects of our being. We cannot be compartmental in our world view or it will not be consistent. If we believe that there is no god then that concept must be basic in our thinking in the other areas. If we believe that the God of the Bible is true then our understanding of Him must affect all other areas. Remember also that we are not to be compartmental thinkers so all of our other understandings in our world view are to be linked with our understanding of God. God tells us that we are to be transformed in the entirety of our being by having our mind renewed with the knowledge of God:

*Rom 12:1-2 "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

Seeking a consistent, integrated worldview is really our command from God in the above verses. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Our mind must be trained to understand all that we encounter with the wisdom that is developed by the Holy Spirit using our knowledge of the Bible as a lens through which we study our walk in the world. The verse below illustrates how our correct thinking affects our desires: *"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."* (Psalm 37:4). As we delight ourselves more and more in the Lord then the desires of our heart change and when what we desire totally overlaps with the desire of the Lord for us then God will see that we receive those blessed desires.

If one believes that life evolved without God's creation then the basic philosophy of that person is very different from that of the person who believes that God created all life. To the strict evolutionist, there is no afterlife so life here is all that there is. The perfect person from a pure evolutionist perspective would be a sociopath because such a person only thinks about himself and what he needs to be happy and he has no discernable conscience. Life is just the survival of the fittest. Evolutionists have a hard time explaining the presence of a conscience in a person

who just evolved but they have made some interesting attempts. The only purpose of life to such a person is his/her survival and happiness in life. I heard a pastor one time say that to such a person the theme of life is: “Get all you can, can what you get, sit on the lid and poison the rest”. I think such a statement is accurate for many such people.

However I know some very wonderful people who are atheistic evolutionists, but such behavior is not generally a result in such a category of people. That such nice people do indeed exist is a good example of the danger of trying to broadly judge people. In fact I know some atheists who are nicer people than many people attending church services! But the attitude toward life is very different for the evolutionist compared to the Christian.

The Christian knows that there is life after physical death and that he will face judgment there. He knows that his place in heaven is guaranteed by the life and works of Jesus Christ, but that he also will have his work on earth judged by the perfect judge. To the Christian human life is a precious gift of God and it is to be respected. To the evolutionist human life is just a step in the development of mankind. The evolutionist has no problem with abortion but to the Christian abortion is murder.

Now let’s just concentrate on a Christian worldview or a God-view of the world. I have an excellent book on this topic (“Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview” by J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, Intervarsity Press, 2003), but it is a bit involved. I will try to make the topic easily applicable for all of us.

A distinguished person, Charles Malik, spoke at the inaugural address at the dedication of the new Billy Graham Center on the campus of Wheaton College in the fall of 1980. The topic was “The Two Tasks of Evangelism” and those tasks were: saving the soul and saving the mind. His talk hit the audience hard for most Christians do not realize that there is an intellectual struggle going on in the world against the true Christian worldview. The two tasks are even more apparent in their need today. Therefore it is imperative that every child of God develop his/her Christian worldview and mature in it often as we learn more about God. The absolute necessity with having a Christian worldview is that we apply our understanding of being a child of God to every aspect of our existence. Most people live a compartmentalized life with no connections between their “Religion” and the remainder of their lives.

I am sure that all of us can think of some prominent people who have said something like “My personal religious preferences do not influence my personal life.” But one cannot be a Christian without having the Lordship of Jesus Christ influencing **all** of his/her life. Character really does matter! We must have direct connections between our Christian understanding and all of the other aspects of our lives, which means that we live an integrated life. Our religion (read “Christianity” for Religion) must be the center of our thinking and it must influence every decision we make in all the other areas. This chart is our definition of a Christian worldview and any choices that we have to make in any area of our life must be influenced by the Lordship of

Jesus Christ in our life. Please keep this chart in your minds constantly as you move through each day. We do not have enough information to know if the king was a supreme compartmentalist but it certainly seems to be the case. At least we know that his confession about Daniel's God was not a confession of belief but just an admission of His supreme ability and worthy of his attention and acceptance of Daniel.

### **Dan 3:1-3**

*Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. (2) 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 provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. (3) 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.*

This is a huge statue standing about 90 feet tall or as tall as a nine-story building! The plain of Dura is just an empty place in some area of Babylon chosen so that the immense statue would be an awesome thing. There would not have been enough gold in all Babylonia to make such a statue out of pure gold so it must have been made of wood and covered with gold leaf. The statue must have been made to visualize the head portion of the dream/vision that the king had. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar was rebuking God's interpretation of the dream for in the dream only the head was gold. The king reasoned that his kingdom should last forever and not be superseded by any other kingdoms. So he made this huge statue entirely coated in gold. It is unlikely that the statue represented the king for such was not done in this area of the world. It could have been representative of his primary god, Nebo. Paying homage to the statue would have been representative of a pledge of allegiance to the god's viceroy, Nebuchadnezzar. The listing of government officials demonstrates a rather well-organized bureaucracy. The "satraps" were in charge of some rather large areas. The "prefects" were possibly lieutenant governors of some sort and perhaps rulers over some military units. The "governors" were leaders of some smaller territories. The "advisors" were local people chosen to give councils. The "treasurers" were obviously in charge of the local treasuries. The "judges" dealt with various areas of the law. The "magistrates" were rulers over various law courts. The "provincial officials" was a title for a governmental executive. The entire kingdom bureaucracy assembled before the statue awaiting the king's order.

### **Dan 3:4-7**

*Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, (5) that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. (6) "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." (7) 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 worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

He seems to be trying to establish a unifying principle to bring together all the tribes and languages of his kingdom into one great government. This is really just an attempt to repeat the tower of Babel by forming a one religion for the world. Many today are also trying to establish a world religion such as the World Council of Churches. In our era, one needs to remove Jesus Christ from the center or even remove Him entirely for such a world religion to be established. We are not told why Daniel was not present since it seems that everyone else was there. Daniel was the chief advisor of the king who was now the ruler of the world. Because of Daniel's exalted position he was probably away on state business. The king had put together quite an orchestra. Some of the instruments are named and then it states all kinds of music were present. The psaltery was a stringed instrument like a harp. The trigon was something like a trombone.

This was not a dedication experience but a forced worship. Music is often used to entice people to have a particular type of response. Today it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between Christian music and worldly music. Paul wrote about the importance of music for the believer in worship:

- Eph 5:18-20 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (20) always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;*"
- Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

But we also read that music started on a bad "note" in the godless line of Cain: "*His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.*" Gen 4:21) Music can either aid a real worship or it can degrade it. If the music appeals to the flesh then it will detract from worship. Unfortunately today many churches are choosing music that appeals to the flesh as they try to make the experience attractive to everyone.

The penalty for not worshiping this statue was a horrible death in a furnace that was burning nearby. Everyone except the three young men immediately worshipped the statue. Perhaps not all were convinced in their heart to participate in the worship but their fear of death and probably their compartmentalization nature led them to immediately participate. What would you have done? How many people today attend church services from desires other than going to a place where they can openly worship God with other Christians? How many people attending churches today know what that church really believes? Make a list of reasons why you attend your local church and evaluate each reason by Scripture.

### **Dan 3:8-12**

*For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. (9) They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever! (10) "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down*

*and worship the golden image. (11) "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. (12) "There are certain Jews 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."*

The use of the word Chaldeans here implies that they are part of the ruling party of Babylon and not merely some of the astrologers. These Chaldeans were undoubtedly jealous of the fast rise to power of these three young Jews. They did owe their lives to Daniel and his friends since their God revealed the dream and its interpretation to the king. It would have been only these three Jews who were included in this report to Nebuchadnezzar so the charge "against the Jews" is a bit too broad. Perhaps the king had appointed some observers to report any violations of his order. Their charge that these three men had disregarded the king was certainly false as a general charge although they did refuse this one order for it violated their first commandment from God:

*Exo 20:3-6 "You shall have no other gods before Me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (5) "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (6) but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

Today we also should be in obedience to authority (Rom 13) unless: Acts 5:29 "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

### **Dan 3:13-15**

*Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. (14) 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? (15) "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 do 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?"*

Nebuchadnezzar replied to the accusations against these three men in a typical manner for someone obsessed with his prideful temperament. How dare anyone defy me! He then controlled himself enough to ask them if the accusation was true. He did not wait for a reply but gave them a way out of the penalty phase if they would obey him. He even volunteered to have the orchestra play again so that they could then fall down and worship the statue. Note that he said that he had made the statue although he probably actually had nothing to do with the construction. Anything that he ordered done was of his doing since he was the absolute ruler. He also again repeated the warning of what would happen to them if they refused to worship.

### **Dan 3:16-18**

*Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. (17) "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. (18) "But 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."*

The three Jews then replied as they lived. The king gave them an opening for their response when he asked: *What god is there who can deliver you out of my hand?* They replied that they did not need to defend their God for He is sovereign and would do His will regardless of the king's demands. Nebuchadnezzar had confused his success against men as though he was greater than any god. He did not understand that he had served the sovereign act of God in the chastening of God's apostate people:

*Jer 27:6-8 "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. (7) "All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant. (8) "It will be, that the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine and with pestilence," declares the LORD, "until I have destroyed it by his hand.*

He was a pawn and not a king! His destruction was to come at the hand of God Who had granted him success in military matters. He would soon learn his true humble state before God.

These men were not put into a fear of this king that would compel them to obey him for such obedience was clearly against their basic teachings from God. They not only learned to state the Shema they also had lived it all their lives as commanded by God:

*Deut 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! (5) "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (8) "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

They would also have known what the prophet Isaiah had written:

*Isa 43:1-2 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! (2) "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.*

Paul also had a similar attitude about the relative importance of his life compared to living it for God: *"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."* (Acts 20:24) Jesus also had a similar attitude even when facing His horrible fate of taking the wrath of God for His people: *"He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."* (Matt 26:42)

This wonderful expression of the faith of these three young men should set an example for all Christians today as we also live in a pagan world. We should also remember Matt 10:28

regarding whom to fear. They acknowledged Nebuchadnezzar as their king but refused to disobey the King of kings. May God grant us this same courage when facing challenges in our time. True faith will obey God despite our feelings, the circumstances around us, or the circumstances before us. These three men were not presumptuous for they did not know God's will for this circumstance. They just trusted God to deliver them if He so willed it but whatever He did was His will to which they were submissive. We read similarly in:

*Hab 3:17-19 Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, (18) Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. (19) The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.*

### **Dan 3:19-23**

*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. (20) He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. (21) 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 furnace of blazing fire. (22) For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. (23) But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.*

Nebuchadnezzar had publically defied the name of the God of the Hebrews and he now had no recourse but to order the immediate execution of these young men. The furnace was for smelting the iron ore and it would look similar to an old glass milk jar on its side. There would be a large opening in which to put the ore and an area underneath for putting the wood and charcoal to be burned to furnish the heat. At the lower level there would also be two or more small holes into which they would put bellows to raise the temperature. It would have been made of thick adobe that would withstand the severe heat. For ordinary smelting, the workers could easily observe the process through the large opening although they would have to be at some distance. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times its normal operating temperature although we cannot be sure how this precise degree could have been attained. The process was extreme for nobody could have survived the ordinary temperature of the furnace. He then chose some people in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego so that they could be thrown like logs into the fire. It also seems a bit absurd to tie up their clothes, coats, caps, and other clothes although the reason seems to be that he wanted to rid the area of any remembrance of these men. The heat was so extreme that the men who put the three young men into the furnace were killed. The king then expected to see the three men immediately burned up in the furnace although he could see that they were still tied up when they fell into the furnace.

### **Dan 3:24-27**

*Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to*



*the king, "Certainly, O king." (25) He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" (26) 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 of the midst of the fire. (27) The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these 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.*

Nebuchadnezzar certainly did not expect to see what he next saw! He inquired if indeed three men had been thrown into the furnace and the soldiers replied that was correct. But he then told them to look at what he reported seeing. He saw four men free from any bonds and walking about in the middle of the fire with no harm. He said that the appearance of the fourth was like a son of the gods! It seems that this fourth person was one of the preincarnate appearances of Jesus Christ (Isa 43:2; Ps 91:9-12). Nebuchadnezzar was standing face to face with a miracle and he went as close to the opening as he could and asked Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to come out. He even referred to them as servants of the Most High God. Note that he did not ask for the fourth man to come out! He then had the observers to inspect the men. They found no evidence that they had been into such a fiery furnace. Their hair, skin, and clothes were not damaged at all and they did not even have any smell of the fire upon them! The only effect of the fire was that they had been set free from their bounds. The fire had then showed that they were not guilty of any affront to their God as He had set them free. It is good to remember Who we are to fear and who we are not to fear: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Matt 10:28)

### **Dan 3:28-30**

*Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants 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. (29) "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." (30) Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.*

Nebuchadnezzar could only admit his defeat to their God. He stated that God has sent His angel to deliver His servants from the king's attempt to execute them. They were then declared innocent of violating the king's command by offering their bodies as servants only of their God. In an attempt to make amends, the king stated that anyone who spoke against their God would face the same fate he had declared for anyone who could not state and interpret his dream. He acknowledged again that there is no other god who is able to do as He had done with the dream and in saving these three men. Later we will see that this event was just an acknowledgement of Nebuchadnezzar that this God existed but not to the exclusion of his other gods. He then promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego so that they prospered in Babylon.

The author of Hebrews accepted this event as real as he wrote that God quenched the fire (Heb 11:34). Also we read in 1 Maccabees 2:59 that “Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved out of the flame”. These writings speak to the authenticity of the events in the book of Daniel. God included these events and others for our benefit so that we can maintain hope in the face of many tribulations:

*Rom 15:4-6 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

*(5) Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, (6) so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The deported Jews were experiencing great tribulations and their land was being devastated, the temple and Jerusalem were in ruins, and they were scattered about or in bondage in Babylon. The experience of these three men would have been very encouraging to those Jews in Babylon as they saw that God was still on the throne and acting for His people. This can also be encouraging to us as we live in a pagan world. There have been more martyrs for Jesus Christ during the twentieth century than during all the preceding centuries so not all believers have been spared death in the furnace of the world. But we are to remember:

*Rev 2:10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Again this book teaches us the sovereignty of God and the great benefits of knowing the Scriptures.