

BUT IF NOT

A prophetic declaration of God's Word, dedicated to the saints of God, and directed to the devil in the midst of his attacks ...

The year is approximately 600 BC, and the renowned Nebuchadnezzar, dreaded monarch of ancient Babylon, is parading like a peacock across most of the known world, conquering everything and everyone in his path. One of the nations he devastated was Israel, and one of the cities he obliterated was the Jews' beloved Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar not only leveled and burned their capital city, but his troops did everything possible to totally break the spirit of their captives. Soldiers corralled the vanquished by the thousands and herded them like cattle from their homeland to Babylon. The city had reached the height of its glory in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar with canals, temples, palaces, famous streets such as the Processional, fortifications such as the Ishtar Gate, and the Hanging Gardens, which were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was not only designed to inspire awe, but to strike FEAR in the hearts of the captives as they were paraded into the city in humiliation. Their transport to this distant culture was the means by which Nebuchadnezzar hoped to permanently dissolve their identity as a people and to smash their wills as individuals.

Babylon has always been the enemy of God's people in Scripture! The empire was founded by Nimrod, the "mighty hunter" (mighty rebel, mighty in sin) in Genesis 10:8-10. The key to Babylonian worship has always been the exaltation of the individual to become his own God. The word "Bab-el" means "the gate of God," and this is what the first Babylonian citizens of Genesis 11:1-9 were trying to build when they constructed their famous tower – AN EASIER MAN-MADE WAY TO GET TO GOD. God brought confusion to their languages in order to scatter them, but Babylon has been working feverishly to re-unify itself against God ever since! Both the political and religious aspects of Babylon will continue to war against the true people of God until the "world government" and the "world church" are defeated by God, as recorded in Revelation 17 & 18. **Babylon is a powerful opponent, but Babylon will be defeated!**

What Nebuchadnezzar didn't realize was that he could only gain dominion over the people of God because God had a higher purpose in allowing it! Long before he ever conquered Jerusalem, God had raised up Jeremiah the prophet to warn of judgment. God was going to purge sin and idolatry from Israel, and use Babylon to do it – **for 70 years**.

Jeremiah 25:11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

However, there was hope in the midst of hurt! Jeremiah prophesied that after this period of time, the exiled families would be released, and there would ultimately be a return to Jerusalem, as well as a restoration of their Temple and their worship of the Most High God.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

1 - THE TRIAL WAS ALLOWED BY GOD. (but also)

2 - THE TRIAL WAS LIMITED BY GOD!

3 - THE TRIAL COULD NOT THWART GOD'S PURPOSE. (but also)

4 - THE TRIAL ACTUALLY BROUGHT ABOUT GOD'S PURPOSE!

IN OTHER WORDS, GOD WAS STILL IN CONTROL!

The entire tactic of King Nebuchadnezzar against Israel was to INTIMIDATE BY FEAR, to make them forget their identity as the people of God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were among the thousands of young men who were taken captive. And although they probably didn't realize it, they were about to become players in an ancient cosmic war between God and Satan, between God's people and the spirit of Babylon.

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.

Nebuchadnezzar was serious about his threat of destruction should the three Hebrew boys not bow and worship his image. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego wouldn't bow because joining the crowd around the image would have violated the greatest commandment!

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Jesus called it the first (preeminent, chief, principle) commandment!

Mark 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Nebuchadnezzar had taken measures to make the worship of the image palatable to all of his subjects. The ceremony was accompanied by beautiful music that drowned out any "reservations" the captives from other nations might have – EXCEPT FOR THE THREE HEBREW BOYS! They weren't the only Jewish captives in the crowd, but even though others bowed all around them, they stood tall – and alone! It was when they refused to compromise that the wrath of the king was incurred. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. This is not a numerical expression, but a figure of speech portraying "utmost intensity" – as hot as possible – a raging inferno!

However, in the face of the most incredible INTIMIDATION and FEAR, their immortal declaration is "**We know God is able to deliver us, BUT IF NOT we still will not bow!**" They did not know the miracle that God was going to perform; they did not know whether He would honor them before the heathen king. BUT THEY WOULD STILL NOT BOW!

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 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. 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.

Some people say, "I will serve God if He helps me," or "I will walk through the fire if God delivers me from the pain of the fire." That is never the feeling of the true people of God. God's people walk through the fire whether it hurts them or not, because they know **God is still in control!**

It was when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to enter the fire – without any assurance of deliverance – that the miracle happened! The men who threw them into the furnace were slain – but the fire didn't touch them! **In Heaven**, God said, "Those are brave boys; I think I'll go down and stand by their side." **On earth**, Nebuchadnezzar said, "I see four men ... and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Daniel 3:24-25 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. 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.

When Nebuchadnezzar called them, they came out of the fire by themselves – without their bonds! The only thing they lost when they stood up for God was their bonds! **There is freedom even in the furnace when God is there with you!** They were loosed in the flames!

When they came out of the fire, everyone "saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (Daniel 3:27) – **the fire couldn't touch them!**

God did not save them FROM the fire – He saved them IN the fire!

This resulted in a testimony to all of Babylon, a chance to hear about the only God "that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3:29)

We live in the last days, when Babylon has made the furnace "seven times hotter!" The devil has launched an all-out attack against the people of God. **IT IS AN ATTACK OF INTIMIDATION AND FEAR!** I cannot guarantee to you that your life, your body, your health, your mind, your family, your home, your marriage, your children, your possessions, your finances, your friends, or your comfort will not be viciously attacked by the enemy. In fact, the truth is that I can just about guarantee the opposite!

Why is the fire so much hotter today? Because Satan knows that his time is short! He is a powerful opponent, but he labors under one crippling fact – he faces a dreaded sentence of eternal imprisonment without possibility of parole! He works under this terrifying reality every moment of his existence, and he knows this is his last chance! That's why his wrath is so stirred up against the people of God. **We are his worst nightmare!**

Revelation 12:10-11 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The point of the story is not HOW the Lord delivers me, or even IF the Lord delivers me – the point is that I refuse to bow to the intimidation and fear of the devil. God can deliver – BUT IF NOT, your fear will not work!

YOU ARE NOT THE BOSS OF ME! YOU ARE NOT THE LORD OF ME!

Isaiah 42:1-2 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

THERE IS DELIVERANCE EITHER WAY FOR THE CHILD OF GOD!

(Steve Willoughby's Declaration of Faith)

I don't believe this about us - it is about harvest. Somehow we have been fortunate enough to be chosen to be in the crosshairs of a titanic harvest struggle. I don't know much but this I know, "When the family of God comes together in unity to do battle, it wreaks havoc in the halls of hell." I love being a part of putting the devil's domain in disarray. This too I know - we win, he loses, big time! ~ Steve Willoughby

My Statement of Faith (Tuesday, December 9, 2008)

Satan, devil, Lucifer, whatever you're called - your name represents destruction, death, and disease. You kill, destroy, maim, wound, hurt, murder and slaughter. You are heartless, soulless, without love, mercy or kindness. Your name represents deceit, deception, and dishonesty. You are a con, a liar, a cheat and a counterfeiter. You are a fraud, fake, pretender, and phony. You are the propagator of pain and poison.

And you don't scare me. Because you are not the God of me, you are not the Lord of me. You have no authority in my life except by permission. You can't kill, hurt or destroy the eternal part of me. I belong to Jesus. He is my redeemer, my rescuer, my restorer and my savior. He is my Lord by choice. I choose him. I reject you and everything about you.

As for this Jesus? I trust Him. I love Him. I love His will, I love His ways, I love His truth, I love His doctrine, and I love His holiness. I am confident in His love. Because His love never fails, it never ends - it is forever as promised. In the name of Jesus there is peace, and light, and love, and joy. Jesus has all power, HE has all dominion and you never get the final say.

I command your wall of darkness to divide and crumble. I command your resistance to end-time harvest to desist and discontinue. I release the prevailing power of prayer, praise, faith and fasting of God's covenant children to wreak havoc into the deepest bowels of every dimension of hell's domain. May the angels of Almighty God, energized by the delight of God's people to arise to battle, inflict maximum damage on the devils domain. I command your threat, your intention, and your strategy to return upon your own head. I command dissention and discord to arise among your own ranks. Let there be division, dispute and disharmony throughout the halls of hell's legions. You have with arrogance and malice overstepped your boundaries and you will be brought into account - not later but now for your miscalculated transgression.

Jesus you are the God of power and strength. I rest in and receive today your power and strength, your love and your mercy. Summon Your power, oh God; show us Your salvation as you have done before. You are the God of "suddenly." You are the God of extraction and escape. You are the God of rescue and return, raining ruin upon the face of your enemies.

I am confident in Your love. I will not fear because perfect love casts out all fear. What is perfect love? Perfect love is when you choose to rest without worry or fear in His ability to perform the completeness of his purpose in and through you. That the trial or test has a definite point or goal and that it will reach its prescribed limit at which time there will be a conclusion and that the result will be immediate, ultimate and prophetic.

To Jesus be all dominion, and honor, and glory forever and ever.