

Daniel - Chapter three

V.1. 'Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold'.

- Nebuchadnezzar carried out this proud act, no doubt, because of the interpretation given of his dream when Daniel said, 'Thou art this head of gold' (2:38).

- Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom had been in power for just a short time, and he was attempting to unify the different religions of his empire by 'self-deification' (setting himself up as God).

- The image was sixty cubits high (90 feet: a cubit being two spans, or 18 inches), and the width, six cubits (or 9 feet).

- In the 'plain of Dura'. Note: The exact location of this plain is not known, but was likely in or near Babylon. In recent years, some have discovered what they believe to be the remains of the 'base' of this great image.

Vs.2-7. The dedication of the image.

- Leaders of the empire were gathered for the occasion: princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces. Note: It's believed that not only those listed were present for the dedication, but multitudes of the common people were present as well. (Possibly numbering into the thousands.)

- 'An herald (official messenger representing the king) cried aloud', making known the decrees.

(1) At the sounding of the six musical instruments, everyone was to fall down and worship the image.

- I mentioned that the image was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. Now, there are 6 musical instruments playing for the dedication.

- Note: 'Six' is man's number. He was created on the sixth day. And a multiple of six (666) is the number of the Antichrist (Rev.13). It is the highest, the very best that man can ever achieve without God.

(2) Anyone who fails to fall down and worship the image will be cast into a burning fiery furnace at that same hour.

- When the musical instruments sounded the people fell down and worshipped the golden image.

Vs.8-12. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the image.

- Certain Chaldeans (those considered to be of the 'master race') accused the Hebrews before the king, bringing three charges against them:

(1) They have not regarded thee, O king.

(2) They serve not thy gods.

(3) They did not worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

- For some reason (not given) Daniel and other Jews were left unnoticed, or, they were not present for the dedication service. (Daniel, being one of the leaders in the country, could have been away on an assignment in some other part of the empire.)

- Questions are raised concerning the Hebrew Boys' refusal to obey the command of the king: (1) What about the scripture that says, 'Obey them that have the rule over you' (Heb.13:17)? or, (2) 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers' (Rom.13:1)? (As Christians, our highest power is none other than God Himself. We are to obey Him at all times and in all things.)

- Without doubt, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were well versed in the scriptures, and were familiar with the second commandment given by Almighty God, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any things that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 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 their fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Exo.20:4-6). (They realized their first, and most important duty was to obey their God.)

- My prayer: 'Dear God, give us young people in our day that will refuse to bow to the idols and pleasures of this world, but will obey and serve you with all their hearts. Give us those who will refuse to 'go along to get along', but will 'stand up' and 'be counted on the Lord's side', regardless of the cost.

V.13-15.. King went into a rage (lost his temper).

- Commanded they bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before him.

- He questioned them to determine if the accusations against them were true, that they had actually refused to bow before the image he had set up. He might have said:

(1) 'Maybe you didn't understand the decree; so I'll go over it again.

(2) I'll give you another opportunity to obey.

(3) If you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well (I'll overlook your refusal to bow the first time around).

(4) But if you refuse to bow this time, you'll be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace'.

- Then the king asked one more question: 'Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?'

Note: I like to think that they answered (at least in their hearts), 'We're glad you asked!'

- He's the God that created the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein.

- He's the God that called Abram out of idolatrous Mesopotamia, gave him the deed to a new land, and promised that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

- He's the God that rolled back the waters of the Red Sea for Moses and the Children of Israel, that they might walk across that body of water on dry ground.

- He's the God that brought down the walls of Jericho for Joshua and his people.

- And one more thing, O King; He's the God we have served from our youth, and the One we are determined to continue serving.

Vs.16-18. 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter'.

- The Hebrew boys were confident their God was able to deliver them from the king. (No need for a committee meeting. Their hearts and minds were already settled concerning the matter.)

- They knew their God was able to deliver from the fiery furnace. Yet, whether He would, or would not, one thing was certain, they would not serve idols nor bow down in worship to the image. Their trust was in God, regardless of the consequences.

Note: The person committed to obey the Lord, and determined to live right, will have his faith tested, just as was the case with these three friends. The Apostle Paul said, 'Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (II Tim. 3:12).

Vs.19-23. Upon hearing their testimony, the king was 'full of fury', and his face was changed (livid and distorted) against them.

- Therefore, he gave orders that the furnace be heated seven times as hot as usual. Note: In 'The Song of the Three Holy Children', of the Apocrypha, it is stated that the servants of Nebuchadnezzar kept throwing 'rosin, pitch, tow, and small wood, so that the flame streamed forth above the furnace forty-nine cubits' (about 75 feet into the air). The fire was so hot that the most mighty of the king's army (those who put the Hebrews in the furnace) were consumed in the flames.

- Too, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when cast into the furnace, were fully clothed: bound in their coats (cloak, or mantle), hosen (fine outer garment), hats (turban: only place used in Scripture), and their other garments. All, of which, should have caught fire quickly.

Vs.24,25. King Nebuchadnezzar, upon gazing into the furnace, was astonished. Rather than seeing the 'three' that had been cast into the fire, he sees 'four': loose (no longer bound), walking in the midst of the fire (seemingly in no hurry to get out), and, without hurt. Amen! We're serving a mighty God! And I'm convinced that the outcome would have been the same if the king's men could have heated the furnace seventy times hotter rather than just seven times. There's nothing impossible with our God!

- The king said, 'Lo, I see four men . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God'.

- Some things important to understand:

(1) There is no definite article ('the') in the original language. It reads, 'a son of God' or 'a son of the gods'. In v.28, when referring to this 'fourth man in the fire' walking with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - Nebuchadnezzar speaks of him as God's angel.

(2) Christ (Adonai; Lord Jehovah; third person of the Godhead) is never referred to as the 'Son of God' or 'God's Son' in the Old Testament.

(3) Nebuchadnezzar could not have known the New Testament revelation of the Son of God, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary.

V.26. The King was convinced. 'So he went towards the door of the burning furnace, calling, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God, come out, come forth' (Moffatt).

- The Hebrews had claimed to serve the true and living God. And now the king recognizes them as true servants of the most high God.

Vs.27,28. An outstanding miracle. 'The fire hadn't touched them - not a hair of their heads was singed; their coats had not been scorched, and they didn't even smell of smoke' (Taylor)!

Vs.29,30. Nebuchadnezzar makes a decree that anyone who speaks a word against the God of the Hebrews would be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. Too, the Hebrews were promoted.