

This is a 'must read' tract

the men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. But those thrown into the fiery furnace were delivered from it. The more intense the heat, the greater and more impressive the miracle of being delivered from it. Every circumstance was calculated to show the direct power of God. They were bound in all their garments, but came out with not even the smell of fire upon them. The most mighty men in the army were chosen to cast them in, these the fire slew ere they came in contact with it; while on the Hebrews it had no effect, though they were in the very midst of its flames. It was evident that the fire was under the control of some supernatural intelligence; for while it had effect upon the cords with which they were bound, destroying them, so that they were free to walk about in the midst of the fire, it did not even singe their garments.

A SCATHING REBUKE TO THE KING

The three captives did not spring out of the fire, but continued therein; for, first, the king had put them in, and it was his place to call them out; and, secondly, the form of the fourth was with them, and in his presence they could be content and joyful, as well in the furnace of fire as in the delights and luxuries of the palace. Let us in all our trials, afflictions, persecutions, and straitened places, have the "form of the fourth" with us, and this should be enough reason to be joyful.

What a scathing rebuke upon the king for his folly and madness was the deliverance of these worthies from the fiery furnace! A higher power than any on earth had vindicated those who stood firm against idolatry, and poured contempt on the worship and requirements of the king. None of the gods of the heathen ever had wrought such deliverance as that, nor were they able to do so.

Daniel 3:26-30. When bidden, these three men came forth from the furnace (Dan. 3:26-30), the worship of the great image was lost sight of. The whole interest of this vast concourse of people was now concentrated upon these three remarkable men. All men's thoughts and minds were full of this wonderful occurrence. And how the knowledge of it would be spread abroad throughout the empire, as they should return to their respective provinces! What a notable instance in which God caused the wrath of man to praise him!

Then the king blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and made a decree that none should speak against him. This the Chaldeans had undoubtedly done. In those days, each nation had its god or gods; for there were, as is now,

"gods many and lords many." And the victory of one nation over another was supposed to occur because the gods of the conquered nation were not able to deliver them from the conquerors. The Jews had been wholly subjugated by the Babylonians, on which account the latter had no doubt spoken disparagingly or contemptuously of the God of the Jews. This the king now prohibits; for he is plainly given to understand that his success against the Jews was owing to their sins, not to any lack of power on the part of their God. In what a conspicuous and exalted light this placed the God of the Hebrews in comparison with the gods of the nations!

It was an acknowledgment that he held men amenable to some high standard of moral character, and that he did not regard with indifference their actions in reference to it; since he would visit with punishment those who transgressed it, and would consequently bestow his blessing on those who complied with it. Had these Jews been time-servers, the name of the true God had not thus been exalted in Babylon. What honor does the Lord put upon them that are steadfast toward him! The king promoted them; that is, he restored to them the offices which they held before the charges of disobedience and treason were brought against them. At the end of verse 30 it is said: "And he advanced them to be governors over all the Jews that were in his kingdom."

The world powers or kings as in Nebuchadnezzar, can hit the furnace of trials and afflictions, as hot as they can, but just a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it. Yet hell will forever torture the ungodly. Those who suffer for Christ's sake, have His presence in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace of trials and afflictions.

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There is sure salvation in the
Middle of
Affliction

Daniel chapter 3 has profound lessons, it brings out lessons of lust for continued rulership by those in power, schism and jealousy prevalent among those in high offices, costly displays offered to images of idolatry and ungoverned passion.

It also provides lessons of the unquenchable fire of persecution to be unleashed on God's people, His unfailing care and protection over them, their conduct during affliction and the sure victory that will follow their relentless trust in God. It also provides other lessons of God's provision to place His own in high offices for a divine mission that at a divinely appointed time, and through faithful discharge of their Christian duty, they may influence the spiritual stance of a nation towards God. This is possible even in this very day.

LUST OF RULERSHIP

This image (Dan. 3:1) has reference to the dream of the king as described in chapter 2. This image is erected only twenty-three years after the dream of chapter 2. In that dream the head was of gold, representing Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and succeeded by metals of inferior quality, denoting a succession of kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar was doubtless quite gratified that his kingdom should be represented by the gold; but that it should ever be succeeded by another kingdom was not so pleasing. Hence, instead of having simply the head of his image of gold, he made it all of gold, to denote that the gold of the head should extend through the entire image; in other words, that his kingdom should not give way to another kingdom, but be perpetual.

DISPLAY FOR IDOLATRY

The dedication (Dan. 3:2-7) of this image was made a great occasion. The chief men of all the kingdom were gathered together; so much pains and expense will men undergo in sustaining idolatrous and heathen systems of worship. So it is and ever has been even in this very day that many national events continue to be conducted in similar manner. Indulgence is not an expression of love. Love must not be expressed by indulgence of pride, extravagance or display. The worship was accompanied with music; and whoso should fail to participate therein was threatened with a fiery furnace. Music was used for self-gratification, hilarity and trifling. God has nothing to do with a confusion of noise and multitude of sounds, but it is Satan who works amid the din and confusion of music to prepare the participants for unholy thought and action. Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego, were required by the king to be present and they willingly complied with the king's requirements as far as they could without compromising their religious principles. With this requirement they could comply and they did. He further required them to worship the image., this their religion forbade, and this they therefore refused to do.

EXERCISE OF FAITH AND COURAGE

King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the three be brought before him and demanded that if when they hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, they fall down and worship the image which he had made, it shall be well with them, but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego 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." (Dan. 3:13-18).

Their answer was both honest and decisive. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. He commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Pride and bigotry cause men to require their subjects to follow their religion, whether right or wrong. When worldly interest allures, and punishment overawes, few refuse, especially, it is easy to the careless, the sensual and the infidel who are the greatest in number. There is nothing too bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music.

TRIALS & AFFLICTION

True devotion calms the spirit, can quiet and softens the trials and affliction while superstition and devotion to false gods inflames the passion. This being the position Nebuchadnezzar had placed himself, he had placed the matter in a little compass-the three Hebrew boys must obey or burn. Firm and resolute in their faith, they believed God will deliv-

er them either from death or in death. They must obey God rather than man, they must rather suffer than sin. The fear of men and the love of the world, make men yield to temptation. The three Hebrew boys were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 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. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Let Nebuchadnezzar hit his furnace, but to the three faithful Hebrew boys, was fulfilled that great promise. "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." (Isaiah 43:2). God's favour and goodwill to His people speak abundant comfort to all believers. Those that have God for them, need not fear who or what can be done against them. True believers are precious in God's sight and His delight is in them.

UNGOVERNABLE PASSION

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, 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. Nebuchadnezzar was not entirely free from the faults and follies into which an absolute monarch so easily runs. Intoxicated with unlimited power, he could not brook disobedience or contradiction.

Let his expressed authority be resisted, on however good grounds, and he exhibits the weakness common to our fallen humanity under like circumstances, and flies into a passion. As ruler of the world, he was not equal to that still harder task of ruling his own spirit. And even the form of his visage was changed. Instead of the calm, dignified, self-possessed ruler that he should have appeared, he betrayed himself in look and act as the slave of ungovernable passion.

MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE

The furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual; in other words, to its utmost capacity that the flame of the fire slew